

EPISODE 85

[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]

[0:00:35.2] CS: Hello, and welcome back to another episode of the Creative Empire Podcast. I'm Christina Scalera, joined by Reina Pomeroy.

[0:00:41.1] RP: Hello everyone!

[0:00:43.7] CS: Today, our guest is Shea Hopely, who is not only a floral designer, but also a stylist based out of Jacksonville, Florida. You have definitely seen Shea's work. You may not recognize her name just yet, but you will after this episode, because her work is actually featured in a lot of Shay Cochrane's Stockshop photos that we all go nuts for. Shea Hopely, welcome to the show, and we're so happy to have you on here. I met you at Cultivate and I've been wanting to bring you on since then, because you were just such a bundle of fun and joy, and I'm so excited to share your insights with our audience. Welcome.

[0:01:18.4] SH: Thank you, I'm so excited to actually participate in this, and nervous, but definitely looking forward to this so yeah.

[0:01:25.1] CS: We'll have a lot of fun, I promise.

[0:01:27.3] SH: Alright.

[0:01:28.0] CS: How did you get into this? You are a floral designer, you're in Jacksonville. Jacksonville isn't typically where we think of like, the wedding market happening, it's usually like Charleston or Savannah. How did you get to Jacksonville, how did you get into floral design, what called you to be a stylist?

[0:01:45.1] SH: Actually, I grew up here. I am a native Floridian. I have been in Jacksonville my entire life. I know that sounds a little boring but yes, I have. I actually went to school for fashion merchandising, decided that was partially the route I wanted to take, and then had an internship with a big retailer here in town for their holiday installation, and actually ended up getting hired on full-time.

My background is in visual merchandising, where at this point in time, which was early 90's, it was a little bit different than it is now. You had free creative reign, you could do larger displays, and really get in to your own personal style and bringing fashion into it. Back when there was mannequins, and windows, and things like that.

That's where the creative side of me started, and I knew once I started that, like that was the direction I wanted to go. From there, with that larger retailer, we had a lot of corporate that will come in and out of town and throw these corporate visits. We would put together parties or launch parties for different products also, and we would order in fresh floral for this. I was very intrigued with that, and with the retailer having wholesale accounts, I was able to go to the wholesaler and pull different, look at different florals and fresh product, and I was hooked at that point.

Still continued to work full time. The girls that worked in the retail stores were getting married, and I'm like, "Well I'll do your wedding. I can do this." That's where it really kind of started, and then I got married, and you know, obviously pulled me more in, and then I didn't want to work full-time. I thought, well if I want to make a go with this, the only way to really make the salary that I wanted to make is I had to do it kind of on my own.

Before I went totally on my own, I did do a lot of contract work for several other local florist owners, which is very eye-opening, because at that point I realized I didn't want to do the retail end of it. Honestly, I had, you know, my years in retail at that point already, so that's when I kind

of figured well, I want to strictly move this towards event-based. That's how it started, and eventually it started in 2009, and was able to stay home once I had my first child, and it was just really the right choice for me. Took me a little while to get there, but it was definitely where I wanted to go.

[0:03:56.2] CS: Awesome.

[0:03:55.9] SH: That's how it started, yeah.

[0:03:58.4] RP: How does your business look now? I know Christina mentioned that you have collaborated with Shay Cochrane, but what other work are you doing creatively in your business right now?

[0:04:07.5] SH: We're probably 99% weddings. We do several styled shoots per year, working with different vendors and product stylists, but weddings are our focus. I'm a very behind-the-scenes type person, so I love to get in there and really just work one-on-one with product, and not on the back end so much. So yeah, that's kind of where we're at. Weddings.

[0:04:31.2] CS: Yeah, and workshops. You were at Cultivate, you did the florals there, which I thought was interesting because it wasn't in Jacksonville. It was actually in Highlands, North Carolina this past year. Maybe this is a little off topic, but I'd love to know, is that like a doable thing? If you want to be a floral designer and have freedom of location, is that possible?

[0:04:51.3] SH: Yes, absolutely, and it's something that we're trying to educate clients on, putting information on our websites. We love to travel, travel available. Yeah, just like floral product ships to my house, it can ship to any location that I'm currently at. It would just be a matter of finding a spot to work, and there's a lot different wholesalers that will lease out their coolers and their work spaces.

Other floral designers have done that. Definitely, travel is definitely an option for us. We've done it a few times, and we're looking forward to doing it at, you know, other locations across the US, but yeah. When we did Cultivate, we shipped it directly there. Fortunately for us, the weather was very accommodating, so we didn't have to worry too much about coolers and things like

that. But yeah, it's fun, it's like work on a road trip, and it's newer and exciting, and definitely gets the creative juices flowing.

[0:05:38.1] RP: Yeah, so interesting, I never thought of that.

[0:05:41:2] CS: Yeah, with flowers, and we brought Katelyn down to the School of Styling, and she's from Boston, and the School of Styling was in Chapel Hill. I think it's possible, but it's a different kind of stylist who is willing to take that risk, because you know, you get to work with some really interesting clients that way, and I mean, I like going beyond the confines of your local geographic area.

We just had our first Savvy meetup for the Savvy Business Owners community yesterday, and it was interesting, because one of the girls was talking about how she wanted a VA that was based here in Atlanta, where she lives, and she said that was because she couldn't trust somebody that she couldn't meet with face-to-face and talk to. I said, "I think that's really limiting, because if you limit yourself to a certain geographic area, you're taking all of the good, the bad, the different, the ugly with it."

If you say that you are only a floral stylist in, you know, Chicago, or Jacksonville, or Atlanta, you're really limited to whatever the market is demanding there, right? I have a friend who is a floral designer in the mid-west, and they still have what she calls "the balls of roses." It's been hard for her to influence them with these really beautiful designs that we see all over Instagram, like yours, Shea. When you're traveling, and you're looking to book those ideal clients, it's great that you've taken that out of the equation, that you're not limiting yourself just to the Jacksonville, Savannah area.

What are you looking for when you're looking for your ideal clients? Obviously, this is going to be different for each of our listeners, and you've been doing this for a little while, but I'd be interested to know, what does your ideal client look like? And maybe, what did she used to look like? How has she evolved, or he? Whatever it looks like for you.

[0:07:22.7] SH: That's a good question. Based on the last year, where we really have been implementing trying to find our ideal client, I would say someone who has a significant style,

maybe fashion wise, a certain style that she wants to project for the overall event, but doesn't care as much about the details — or I say not care as much — but wants to handle, pass over the details and those smaller things to us to handle.

She overall has an image, a picture in her mind of what she wants things to look like, and hands that over to us and says, "Okay, you work on all the final details, and you make it special, and you make it personal for us." I think that's the type of client that we're looking for. We've noticed a lot of our brides are a little bit older than they were when I started the business. When they're a little more defined, and know their style better in that point in their life. I think that's made a big difference as far as our clients go.

A lot of it is based on location. The venue, all the surrounding elements that go into an event style-wise also comes into play, you know? For the overall feel of it. We get a good feel of okay, what music are you doing? Band are you doing? DJ? Are you doing plated dinners? Are you, you know, do you want texture, do you want color? All that really kind of comes into play, but basically "this is what I love, you take it and kind of run with it," and then once we do that initial proposal and we get a good feedback, or you know, "We really love this portion of it, can we just tweak this?" That's kind of when we realize we've hit, you know, we've got our ideal client. Somebody that's as excited to work with us as we are to work with them.

[0:09:00.2] CS: Yeah, I love that you just said, "as excited to work with you as you are to work with them." It shows that, you know, you really are that excited to work with your clients. Before we came on today, this morning, we were talking a little bit about how you've been more intentional about cultivating that brand and that image that you're putting out there to find these ideal clients, and you know, one of the ways that's really popular right now, still popular, is styled shoots.

One of the mistakes that I see a lot of people do is just get involved with every styled shoot that they can. I guess their rationale, I don't know, but I think their rationale is just like a blanket approach, right? Just like Reina, what's the phrase I'm looking for here. The shoot and spray approach, where you just like, you know.

[0:09:42.7] RP: All the things.

[0:09:43.0] CS: Shotgun approach, that's what I'm looking for. Yeah, where you just, it's like a shotgun, and it just goes off in every direction, and you just hope one of the little pellets hits on something, right? One it is published, one of them is seen by the right client, who then refers you to our friends.

You've taken a very different approach. You've taken the approach where you're scaling back and you're being very selective, it sounds like, about who you decide to shoot with and collaborate with, and then even on the styled shoot, who gets involved?

Can you talk a little bit about how you decide to do a styled shoot with someone, and then what are some of the things that you're looking for before you decide to say yes?

[0:10:19.1] SH: Yeah, when I first started, I took — like you said, we took on, we wanted to be involved in every photoshoot, get our name out there, quickly realizing that that was not the best route to go, because we wanted to be more intentional with our style. If we went in every direction, like you were saying, you were hoping one little area would hit, but then you're also confusing your client as to your specific style and your niche.

We would have so many vendors on site for these photoshoots, and nobody knew, the right hand didn't know what the left hand was doing, and all the consistency and the small details were not cohesive anymore, it was very stressful for me, and it was not a fun process. I wouldn't want anything — photoshoots, it's going to be so much fun, and it was not necessarily what I thought I was going to be. At that point, I kind of stepped back and realized, okay, we're going to do one or two of these a year.

Also keeping in mind, on a floral designer end of it, we incur the most costs for these photoshoots. It's not just our time, it's product, and we would get people to contact us wanting to do these shoots, and I'm like well, you know, at some point you can't just keep shelling out and providing all the product for this.

I'm like okay, so we're going to step back and we're going to do one, two a year, and we're going to style everything. If I know that I'm putting that cost out there towards a design, I want it

to reflect me, and be able to use those images, and be pinpoint on our ideal clients, and not so much just like you said, a shoot and spray, where you just hope one of the right images lands in the right hands, or the right tag, or the right thing.

We definitely want to keep it small. We keep it to two or three vendors if possible, especially on site for day of. Like I said before, the first ones we did, there was just literally 20, 25 people, and it just gave me the worst anxiety, and it was not a pleasurable experience by any means.

That's what direction we're going, and we do one or two a year, we hand-select vendors that we want to work with in the future, and that we want to be associated with their style, being cohesive with our style. We're not fighting each other, because that to me makes it more stressful, and not really worth it as far as putting yourself out there, connected to someone who is complete opposite of your style, and complete opposite of your ideal client. You know, it's kind of canceling each other out I think in my mind.

[0:12:38.3] RP: For sure. I think that what's really interesting about what you're saying is that a newer entrepreneur, somebody who is maybe brand new, might have to do all the things, and try different styles, or have lots of different types of clients, but you're at a place in your business, and I would advocate like anyone who has a steady inquiry stream of people who can really start to be exclusive about clients, and then like exclusive about the vendors that you work with.

I love what you said, Shea, in terms of that the style shoot kind of mentality is I do them very intentionally. Find the people you jive with, the styles that you really want featured on your website, and only do the ones that feel good for you. If having 20, 25 people at the shoot gives you anxiety then don't do that. I love that you're changing the norm of how styled shoots are being done.

I keep hearing, and Christina, I think you do too. We keep hearing about people spending lots and lots of money on these styled shoots and not really getting much of a return, and for a florist like you, you're spending a lot of money, and I think calligraphers with like all the paper pieces that you have to put together, and all the like, maybe other types of collateral too you have to

put together, it costs a lot of time and money to be part of these things. Being strategic about it I think is a really great idea.

I was just going to ask you, Shea, really quickly, what are the types of vendors? You said two to three people. What kinds of vendors are you working with, at least on site for these shoots?

[0:14:04.8] SH: Obviously, photographer has to be on site, and hair and makeup has to be on site. Not necessarily on site, but it helps to be on the site for touchups and throughout the day, depending on what time of the year it is. I would say, that's really necessity wise all that you need, and we had — the past one we did, we had the calligrapher and invitations designer on site, because she also had some rental products, like some flat ware and things like that she brought.

Yeah, very minimal. Models, photographer, hair and makeup, and then generally speaking if we have cake, or desserts, or perishable items like food-wise, they'll just bring them at a certain time block and drop them off, and not necessarily be there on site. You know, you're looking at six to eight people versus 20 to 25. Totally different atmosphere, and for me, my personality, its much more enjoyable a process.

I feel like if you also have that many people, and you have that many little vignettes of styling areas, and a photographer shooting them at all different times, or she has a second shooter, then you don't really know what's happening. There's multiple things going on at the same time. You don't really know if you're getting that shot that you want, showing that specific detail, because a lot of times, you know, that was what will start inspiration for a shoot. It's like, I want to get this little detail, and then it kind of balloons into the overall design.

With too many things and too many people, you don't necessarily get what you started off to get from the beginning of the process. Yeah, eight people is ideal, six to eight.

[0:15:33.5] CS: Yeah.

[0:15:33.7] RP: For sure.

[0:15:37.1] CS: When you're planning out, we talked a little bit about the strategy behind this, but you know, what does that look like? Do you sit down with those eight people, six to eight people and say, "This is our goal, and this is how we're going to accomplish that goal," or is it a different process for you?

[0:15:53.0] SH: It's usually one of two. Either we'll have come across a photographer that I really love their work, and like I've recently done, we did one last year with Amalie, who is out of Orlando. We used her for a wedding and I fell in love with her work. I knew at that point, she's going to be the next one we want to work with. Looked at her schedule, looked at my schedule, kind of got the time block hammered out, and then from there, I knew I wanted, like the last one that we did, I wanted to include some sort of fun dessert display.

One of our special things that we offer our clients is we build props. That comes back from my visual merchandising days, where we would build fixtures, and build walls, and all these fun bigger pieces, so that's where I get excited about that. We kind of come up with the idea that we wanted to build a donut wall. It's literally been shared quite a bit in the last six months, and recently actually inquired for the Rachel Ray show, which we are super excited about, and I'm not sure if I'm supposed to say that yet, but she's supposed to be showing it on her show at some point this year. All from social media but that's kind of where...

[0:16:52.1] CS: Yeah, that's pretty cool.

[0:16:53.6] SH: Yeah, either a vendor that I come across, I love their work and it flows, we're on the same page and it reflects well, or a specific detail, like a donut wall or a larger prop that I've been wanting to construct, and feel like I can use for a client, or incorporate another design and get it out there, being seen. Either one of those is kind of how the process starts for me.

[BREAK]

[0:17:19.6] CS: Gatherings by Caroline Quinn left us this review on iTunes. She said, "The first thing I do every Monday and Thursday morning is roll out of bed and download the new Creative Empire episode. I haven't skipped a show." Wow, thanks Caroline. She also says, "In addition to providing listeners valuable business information for free, the ladies behind Creative

Empire make a point of bringing on experienced creatives with diverse backgrounds. I'm always captivated with what they have to say. One question for you guys: it seems like you've attended a fair amount of workshops, which ones do we deem the most valuable?"

She's also a new business owner, she's in search of a workshop that will help her grow her business, but with so many choices, it's hard to narrow down which one is the best investment. Thank you for your input. Thank you, Caroline Quinn, and that's something that we will definitely be answering on a show. I don't think that there's one right answer though, just off the top of my head, and it's not fair because I don't have Reina on the line. Tell you what? We'll do a show about this, but thank you so much for your great review. We love to hear from all of you out there listening so please feel free to jump on iTunes and leave us a rating, leave us a review, especially if you like this show. Thanks guys, bye.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:18:30.8] CS: It's really cool that you mentioned the Rachel Ray show reached out to you, and probably by the time this airs, it will be out there. I'm hoping, so that this is fine, but it's funny, because we've seen a lot of people in the creative industry be featured all across different platforms. You know, Shayla Nelson was recently — if you guys missed it somehow, in whatever rock you're under, she did a shoot of her, she basically did a kind of a styled shoot of her grandparents a couple of years ago.

Unfortunately, her grandfather since passed away, so it's a really special thing, because she basically — they dressed up in their wedding attire, or like a suit and like a bridal gown. I don't know if it was their originals or not. But either way, she's a film photographer, so she shot them in film with these beautiful florals, and I mean, she published that on her blog probably like a year ago or two years ago.

I mean, whenever it was, and then all of a sudden it just got picked up by BuzzFeed and went viral. It was everywhere. She was eight and a half months pregnant, so people were trying to bring her on to like the Today Show and stuff, and she's like, "No, I can't fly," and then Callie, with the hedgehogs, I'm forgetting her last name. Reina, you know her better than I do, but she also — she did a shoot in Target.

It was really fun just to see that happen recently, and now with your donut wall. It's definitely, it happens, and I think one of the most fun things about being in this industry is you know, looking on Pinterest now, where two or three years ago I would look and be like, "Wow, that's really pretty." Now I go and I look and I'm like, "That's Shea's work, that's Ali's work, that's whoever's work." I recognize these pieces, and it's so fun to be a part of that.

I think for anybody that's just out there getting started and thinking like, "I'll never be a part of this," or "I'm not part of this community," or "It's just not for me yet." It is. It's there for you to take, and it's there for you to get involved. You just have to make that decision to do that, and you know, it sounds like you made that decision in 2009 with this business.

Now it's led to some really cool stuff down the line. Not immediately, but that's like, the pattern that we're seeing here is that when it's something that you're passionate about, and something that you follow, it just very naturally leads to these opportunities. Now, it sounds like to — these strategic styled shoots that you're taking on. I love that you had so much strategy going into it, and you're very selective now about who you're picking, because I'm a big believer in, you just have to figure out what your "enough" is, and that looks different from someone else's.

Shea, for your "enough", what does that look like for you each year? If someone's just starting out as a floral designer, a stylist and they're thinking, "I need to book 20 weddings next year," and that's just kind of like an arbitrary number that they have. What goes into your decision to choose X amount of weddings for 2017 or 2018?

[0:21:11.5] SH: I would just definitely say try to keep intentional. If their design style is complete opposite of what you want to do moving forward, as much as you probably don't want to say no, say no.

[0:21:23.8] CS: Yeah, what if you need the money? You're just starting out. How do you deal with that?

[0:21:28.0] SH: You just try your best to woo them in another direction, or say, "Yeah, we would love to incorporate the daisies in your bouquet. Would you be open to this color instead of this

color?” Just adding in other options, or just pushing them in the direction that’s not necessarily totally opposite of what they want, but a little more in your direction of your style.

It’s definitely says a lot about a designer if you can take the bare minimum of products and make something amazing or really good out of it, that says a lot. I would just say just try to be as selective as you can, and we do, we still take on those as what we call over here “bill payers” also sometimes. That you can’t avoid, or they are former clients, relatives, or things like that, but I would also say, if it’s not something that you love and you take it on anyway, obviously, you’re trying to get your business going, you need it as we say to pay the bills, then don’t post it.

Don’t advertise it, because it’s not something that you want to do again. Just between you and your client. You booked that event, and that is part of your goal. Just keep strategizing, moving forward just to get to that ideal client, a little bit closer every time. It won’t happen overnight. It’s a scary process. It was scary for us. I never said no to anyone but looking back, there are times where I wish I had. So just keep it in mind, it can be scary, but it’s definitely an overall process.

[00:22:51.2] RP: Yeah, I think that is so true of any service industry that you’re really continuing to hone who it is that you like to work with, and what kind of work you want to put onto the world, and I appreciate you say that it’s a process, because people see, newer entrepreneurs see people like you who are successful, who have really made it in their eyes, and they’re feeling discouraged, because they probably assume that you started out knowing exactly who you were meant to serve.

It’s cool to hear from you that it wasn’t always the case, that maybe I should have said no a couple of times along the line but I didn’t, and I think that those times that we learn that lesson are the ones that we look back on and say, “Ha, this is one of the reasons why I was able to hone in what I didn’t like and what I like,” so I appreciate you saying that.

I actually have a question about styled shoots. I used to be a wedding planner, and this is a pet peeve of mine, and I wonder what your take is on asking other people for participating in styled shoots. For vendors like you, who really do have to foot a lot of the bill. Can you give us some best tips or tricks in terms of asking another vendor? Like etiquette on asking, or budgeting, or whatever that communication might look like?

[00:24:02.6] SH: I would say do a little research, find out if they are familiar with your work, if they even know who you are. Obviously, you know who they are, because you wouldn't be inquiring them if you didn't. So see if they know who you are. If they have been exposed to your work at all, and then ask them. Not necessarily "I need this," or "Can you provide this, this and this," ask, "How many styled shoots do you do a year? Would you consider working with us on one?"

Let them know that you only do a certain amount a year, and that makes them feel a little more special when you're asking them. Also, you want to ask, "Is there anything that you've been wanting to show?" Any new service that you're adding, or a new design element that you want to get out there?" Then consider that, working with your detail that you have already started the process with, or your other vendor, that you make sure you work closely with the photographer as well too.

So I would just say not to try and just ask or give me, give me, give me, but what are you wanting to show out there? What — I don't know. It's tricky, but just making them feel wanted, and that you're excited to work with them, and that you feel like your styles mesh together. Definitely get some insight from them, but have that definitely figured out before the day of the shoot so that you're not all on site trying to pull everything together, and nobody is really for sure on the design and what's going where. So definitely start that out before the day of shooting.

[00:25:30.4] CS: On the day of shooting, what are some common things that you just never thought about before you started doing these styled shoots, and you wish somebody had been there to be like, "Shea, you are going to want to do this." What are some of those things that happened that people might avoid from the get go?

[00:25:47.1] SH: I really think it just goes back to having too many people. Too many cooks in the kitchen, but I learn that from experience. A lot of that has to do with just my personality sometimes too. I don't know, it's a hard to one to answer. I'm at a loss honestly, I just try to enjoy the process, and connect with the other designers and other creative people, because at the end of the day, you want to be a good experience for everybody.

We get really silly behind the scenes a lot. To make it fun, make it entertaining, make sure there is plenty of food, candy and desserts. Depending on — make sure that the weather is comfortable, that you brought blankets, or fans, or things like that. Little details to set it up and make it a production, and make it a fun behind the scenes party for everybody, because that puts everybody in a good mood, and that's generally when you get everybody's best work.

[00:26:37.3] RP: For sure, and I think that just knowing that you're going to jive with those people is super important. I, as a planner, I really liked having as much of the work and the decisions made before we even got to the location, so that everything was vetted out. Then once we got there, everyone got to do the design portion, or whoever was designated to do that got to do it.

I appreciate what you are saying in terms of make it a fun experience, and saying thank you goes a long way, even if everyone is on the same team. To say thank you, and appreciate one another, and acknowledge the beautiful work done, because it's a collaboration, right? A styled shoot is a collaboration in it of itself.

[00:27:15.1] SH: Yes, absolutely. It wouldn't happen without your buddy being involved.

[00:27:19.4] RP: Have you developed any cool, fun relationships, or any ongoing relationships as a result of maybe a styled shoot, or some other kind of collaboration?

[00:27:28.2] SH: Yeah, absolutely. I met Emily Grace Design. She is an amazing calligrapher, and wedding planner also, during one of the photo shoots, and several photographers in different cities and different locations that we've come across. I don't know, that's a good question too, but my personality is a little bit of an introvert. So I scan, and seem to just go online and look around at different things, and check out everybody's work, and things that caught my eye. I'm not necessarily one to reach out to these people, which is why I've really forced myself in the last couple of years to go to conferences.

Scary as it is sometimes for me, it really forces me to get out there and talk face-to-face with people, and connect on things, and discuss things that I never would have met that person, because I am not really one to reach out using social media.

[00:28:16.0] RP: Yeah, and I think that so many of us are introverts. I am not an introvert, but Christina is, and there are lots of people who are listening who are introverts and might feel discouraged that they feel like their own little island, but they are so shy and they can't reach out. The fact that you have been able to build a really successful business being an entrepreneur is encouraging. Christina, do you have anything to say about that?

[00:28:39.6] CS: Yeah, I mean, I would just say that I think that being an introvert can be a source of, I don't want to say power, because that sounds really lame to me, but it can be at least a good source of, it's a great dynamic to bring to the kind of team that you are talking about at a styled shoot. Because you might have somebody who is more extroverted and can coordinate everybody coming, and where everybody goes, and just be the director on the day of.

And then you could have the introverted personalities that, I don't know, maybe this is stereotyping, but tend to be the planners, and the list makers, and checking things off behind the scenes, and setting up the Google Doc, or whatever it looks like for somebody as an introvert to really make sure that everything behind the scenes is flowing nicely. That's not to say that one can't do the other. That's not true at all, but that's just what I tend to feel in my own business and with my own self when I do collaborations.

I'm not shy, I don't want to ever confuse that. I'm really not shy. I'm not afraid of public speaking. I love doing it, but I also at the end of the day I need to go back to my hotel room and I need to just decompress, and so I think it's great if you do know that you have extroverted friends that you could team up with them. Like Shea is actually sitting there in the room with Brooke from Floral Designs too, and I don't know this, but I feel like Brooke is more extroverted than you Shea, just from meeting and talking to you guys.

So I think that if you can find people like that, that are a great compliment. Reina is very extroverted, and so that's a great compliment here on the podcast. It can make for a really dynamic team, and your strengths can just play off of each other, rather than both of you dominating that conversation, or that strategy, or that styled shoot, or whatever the end result may be. So I love that you pay attention to that, Shea, and that you really lean into that.

You found what you liked to do and you are honest with yourself, because that is one of the biggest things that we often do is we just say, “Yeah this styled shoot is great,” or whatever we’re doing. This newsletter, this project, this course, a podcast, whatever it is that we’re doing is great, but deep down, it’s just not bringing us the level of satisfaction that we want, and there’s a reason for that. Maybe it’s because your personality just isn’t in line with whatever platform you’re promoting you’re on right now.

And so just looking for the outlets that are good for you is what I see people finding success in, and so I love that you have been really strategic about this, Shea. Going forward into the future, what are some things that you’re hoping to see, I guess, in your own business, and maybe in the floral community in general?

[00:31:13.9] SH: Definitely encouraging people to, like you said, group up with people who are opposite personalities than you. That was one thing I did this year is I actually hired an assistant with a complete manager-type personality and attitude, which has really complimented me a lot. Being my personality, I love — which is part of the reason that I do like and enjoy styled shoots so well, is I can actually, instead of having to be so talkative or voice so many things, I can show up with my work and say, “Look this is my work.”

I’d rather my work speak for itself than me have to do that sometimes. So I would just encourage people yes, definitely pair up with somebody who’s a little bit opposite of you to offset your personality. And I’m sorry I forgot the rest of the question you are asking me.

[00:31:57.6] CS: I was just asking, what do you hope to see? Like what are some positive changes? I just talked about how you recognized the things that are your strengths, and how others could possibly do the same thing to help their business, but what are some things that you hope are going to change in the floral community, not just in your business in general, and what are some things that you’re hoping to see maybe shift?

I would love for the conversation around styled shoots, and the cost that photographers and calligraphers really have to incur, I would love for that to be something that people are aware of, because it’s like you said, I think they’re not. I don’t think they realized that as a floral designer,

you're spending \$700 to \$900 on flowers, and coolers, and shipping, and all of this other stuff, and that's great if you are the photographer, and I'm not saying that your talent is devalued, but at the same time, there's a real cost that you are incurring as a floral designer.

So what are some changes that you hope to see, not just maybe in the floral industry, but just in the creative industry as whole as we wrap up 2016 and head into 2017?

[00:33:01.1] SH: I guess, really just to look at, as floral design-wise, to look at everybody's different styles. When you have several inquiries — we got a lot of clients who compare different quotes and different pricing to different florists, and it's completely, you are going back to the aspect of being an artist. You can give the same amount of product to each person and they're going to do something totally different with it. So it's not comparing apples to apples doing that.

Looking at everybody's distinctive styles, and gauging who you're hiring based on their artistic level, and their qualities, and their talents, versus just overall "I want orange dahlias, and this and this, and it should cost this much." So you're basing things on people's overall experience and expertise in the industry, and not so much just the basic product that they're providing.

Like you are saying, all the other vendors recognizing how much work goes into our end of our business. In floral design, there is a lot more hard work, labor, sweating, schlepping involved than people realize behind the scenes. I have also mentioned to Brooke before about having former clients like do little interns, or even before their event like working with us on a Saturday to actually see what goes into it. So just basically looking at the overall appreciation of the aspects of the industry, and knowing how much work is really involved on our backend.

Kind of like with the photographer, it's the opposite. They are doing and showing up on the day, spending the day shooting, and then their work is after the fact on the other side of it. So people often forget about that, so just thinking about how much goes into it. Then there's vendors appreciating other vendors time, and their talents, and their years of experience moving forward.

I mean, it's changed so much since 2009. Weddings have become more of a production. Overhauled everything, and not just somebody calling and saying, "I need six bouquets and three corsages". It's completely different from when I started. It's exciting for me as far as the

overall, going back to my visual merchandising background, looking at the overall design of the whole entire event with everything being thought out, more so than them just calling and saying, “I need 10 centerpieces in this color palette.”

That’s exciting for me, as far as the whole you know, everything being cohesive, and every detail mattering, and everybody working with everybody, from the planner, to the photographer, to the designer, to the caterer, as far as the overall set of how everything looks. That’s where it’s really gotten exciting for me, and that’s where it’s really changed a lot from 2009 to present.

[0:35:33.6] CS: Yeah, for sure. Thank you, Shea. We’ve talked a little bit about this, but what does — in the future, what does your creative empire look like for your floral design business? Is it more styled shoots, is it more brand photography? What does that look like for you?

[0:35:46.9] SH: I definitely would like some more styling, behind the scenes type branding shoots and things like that. Working with other vendors is really exciting for me. Actually refreshing to actually work with somebody who has a little more insight to that industry and with each other, that’s definitely helps your creative juices to get flowing.

For me, moving forward, its really just about taking less events per year, and at this point for me, more significant events with you know, a little more higher budgets. Instead of going and you know, doing 30 weddings a year, doing 15, and just raising minimums, and giving to that level of events that we want to produce.

That’s really our goal moving forward, and we started that beginning of last year, and we’ve really actually done really well getting about halfway there, and it’s a scary process, but we’re getting there. It’s exciting just to book the type of caliber of events that you want to do for next year.

[0:36:39.0] CS: Yeah. Where can people find you, Shea, if they want to work with you?

[0:36:43.4] SH: Well, we’re on Instagram, it’s just @Sheahopely, and then we have our website which is sheahopelyflowers.com. We’re also on Facebook as well under sheahopelyflowers, so

those are pretty much all of our accounts, Instagram probably being the latest and greatest, and we've really put most of our effort there. Definitely check that out.

[0:37:01.1] CS: That's great. Thank you so much, Shea, for being on today, and all of you listeners out there, go build your Creative Empire.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:37:09:6] 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]