

EPISODE 93

[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]

[0:00:35.1] RP: Welcome back to another episode of the Creative Empire Podcast, it's Reina and Christina here. Today, we have Janet of Janet Gwen designs. I'm so excited to introduce you to her because she has incredible, beautiful products and her mission is to encourage and highlight unfiltered creativity by challenging social standards of art and just bringing more art into everyday life.

I'm so excited to bring you on Janet and to share not only your marble beautiful cases or your hand painted designs but just to talk to you about what it's been like on your journey. Welcome Janet

[0:01:08.6] JH: Thank you so much for having me.

[0:01:10.1] RP: Absolutely. Tell us, what's going on in your business now?

[0:01:14.8] JH: Expansion. I think everyone wants an empire and that's what I am aiming for. Right now, I'm really wanting to scale my business as it grows bigger and how to culminate that growth in a proper way because I feel like when we hear businesses growing, it's like exciting but...

[0:01:31.3] CS: You know, you were definitely on the younger side. Did that come into play when you started your business, or what was the impetus for starting what you're doing now?

[0:01:42.4] JH: Well, what I now I started because I wasn't happy with the direction of my life. So when I started I was 17 in high school but then you're at that awkward age point when you are a senior in high school and you have to either go to college or get a job.

So my route has always been planned, pre-planned for me. I was an over achiever, very ambitious, I thought that I was going to be a doctor or a lawyer like the traditional pathway that my parents have planned for me. I have never even thought about deviating from that path because I wanted to get my parent's approval and I had all these expectations on me.

Society and my teachers, everyone put all this pressure on me to go to college. So even though I started my business when I was 17, I stopped. Because it was not something that anyone would thought I should do.

[0:02:27.7] CS: Yeah, what did it look like back then?

[0:02:31.2] JH: When I was 17? I was actually painting out of an art classroom. I used all the supplies, I would actually duct tape my phone to paint on top of it and then when I get bored, I rip off the duct tape and then repaint it.

That's honestly how I started selling phone cases, which was plastic cases I got, like random phone cases laying around the house, people will bring me the phone case and I would paint it in art class. I would deliver it during lunch time. I stole it from the library. My principle, you would think that I would get trouble, he was just like, "Oh that's so cool, how can I buy one?" I'm like, "Okay, since you're not going to suspend me or anything."

[0:03:04.2] CS: That's awesome. I'm glad he was cool with that because, you know, I feel like there's so many points in a young entrepreneur's business when things can just get nipped in the bud, right? It's crazy if you look back like on the coincidences even in your own life, like how you met your partner, something like that.

[0:03:18.9] JH: Exactly.

[0:03:21.0] CS: So on little day that you happened to be somewhere or like the one person that said something that encouraged you or discouraged you. When you're doing that and you were selling from school, when did you realize that this was something that could be bigger and how did you make it bigger?

[0:03:36.2] JH: Well when my art teacher was like, "I can see you making millions from just selling phone cases." Because he was watching me, like he's the one that actually inspired me to paint on phone cases because there's texture and color. Not just like, "Okay, what if I made it 3D instead of print? Okay and what about on my phone case because I'm 17, I'm broke and had no money?"

So I had to get creative and he was the first person who really said, "You can actually make this into a business." I was like, "Honestly, I guess I could," and I even started painting on index cards as a way to have representatives around the schools that I could like — around the area of the school that I couldn't reach. So I had people carrying around index cards and designs for other students to pick from. That's how I grew it slowly around the school.

[0:03:36.2] RP: I love it. If nothing else, you are super resourceful, right? You have the things that you have and then you're going to do something from there. Can we go down a little bit of that path? We started a little bit in terms of you were expected to be an attorney or a doctor. I know that expectation as well and I didn't do either of those things. But when did you decide for yourself?

[0:04:42.2] JH: Two years and it was honestly awful because I wasn't passionate about it, I wasn't excited about it, I honestly always thought about how I could grow my business. Most people don't know that this is actually my third startup of the same business.

I started when I was 17 but then when I graduated, I stopped it, I started again at 18 but it actually was bigger than I could imagine, and I didn't know anything about shipping or online, I did it online. Then at 19, that's when I was two years in, I was like, "You know what? I'm not really happy with college." I actually changed my major from being — because there's so much surrounded accountants to economists to, like I kept going down the pathway, "Maybe this will

make me happy?” But nothing ever did make me happy and then when I thought about how excited I got about creating my own business and painting, that’s what actually got me excited.

So I decided to stop going to school, which was a big decision. I actually didn’t even tell my parents they kind of just — they haven’t realized I stopped going to school because I worked 40 hours in retail on top of that so they just thought I was gone all the time because I was working, not because I was going to school.

I took the extra time I have after hours of retail and built my business from there. I started on Etsy and I didn’t know anything about Etsy. But this time I wasn’t scared to not do it. Instead, I googled everything I could about Etsy. Oh yeah, Google, best friend for business.

[0:06:00.4] RP: Yeah, for sure. I think that there’s a lot of bad information too so vet your sources.

[0:06:06.2] JH: Oh absolutely. I’m not saying believe everything you read, but I made sure that I read enough where I was just like, “Oh I got this, I can ship.” Because before, when I shut my business down in one week because I got freaked out because I was like, “Oh, I don’t know anything about shipping.” But I let the fear of that stop me from pursuing it and this time I was like, “Okay, I want this, I’m going to make it happen,” even if I had to do it in secret because I wasn’t actually supposed to do it.

[0:06:29.9] RP: Yeah, something that I love about your story is that, you know, we know each other a little bit. Something that I love about Janet’s story is that she sees something and then goes after it, like full blown. She’s the picture of being 17 and then wanting to do this thing to now, and having a really sustainable business and being able to finance the life that you want. That is such a testament of your character. Remind us how old you are because people can’t see you. Do you not want to talk about it?

[0:06:56.1] JH: No, I’m totally fine, I actually love asking people to guess how old I am because it’s been all over the spectrum because I look like I’m 12 for those who can’t see me but I’m actually 22.

[0:07:05.4] RP: Still really young, right? I think a lot of people who are just starting their businesses right now who are disqualifying themselves because they're so young, they feel I don't know, not qualified to run a business because maybe they didn't get a business degree or maybe they didn't go to college or whatever. What advice would you have for them?

[0:07:24.8] JH: To not let people's opinion or expectation dictate who you are. One of my favorite quotes ever, and I'm not even sure where I read it from but it's like, "Do you remember who you were before the world told you who you should be?" I love that quote so much because if I went back and followed the game plan that everyone laid out for me, I would probably be in school to be a doctor, but I wouldn't have stuck it out either way if I followed it.

I wish I started when I was 17, yes, I didn't know what the heck I was doing but I was so sad and ridden by anxiety of having to choose to go to college when that's not what I wanted to do. My advice for any young entrepreneur is just to go out there and do it, regardless of who tells you who you should be or what you should do.

Because a lot of people who are asking me this question, it's always like, "But I need a college degree to validate myself." I'm like, "You do not need a college degree to validate yourself at all. That should not matter because you're paying a lot of money for that piece of paper and you're not happy, then it's not worth it."

[0:08:24.4] CS: A lot of our listeners I think are going to be a little bit triggered because we've all done this, right? I wrote down a list of everything that you were too. So you were too young, you were too inexperienced, you had to Google everything, you quite three times and just gave up and came back to the business, you had no money.

It sounds like you didn't have a community, right? So it's not like you're really relying on a platform of followers or used level subscribers, you were working 40 hours a week, right? You didn't have a degree. So like all of this things that we always are telling ourselves and I'm so guilty of doing this. Like using things as safety blankets, "Oh if I just have this course, if I just have this thing, if I just did this one — hire this one person, I would be XYZ instead."

That's going to trigger stuff for people because we've all been there, we've all done that, we're like, "Oh we're just through this, we don't have that and if we just had that, we'd be so much better, we finally be this successful entrepreneur we want to be." I love it. Because you've just taken all of that and flushed it down the toilet. So thank you.

[0:09:28.0] JH: Well, you're welcome because that's why I'm really always passionate about talking about it is that, if you're always making excuses, that's all you're ever going to have. I really don't think you should be defined by anyone's expectations or opinion. If you want to do something because you're passionate about it and you're happy, yes, it may not make any money right away. Do it. You're going to regret not starting sooner because I'm definitely regretting not selling sooner because like you guys said, I was inexperienced, I didn't know and...

[0:09:51.4] RP: What age would you have started? 12? I mean, I guess you could have had a business at 12 but that's intense.

[0:09:56.3] JH: I started my first business in 2nd grade.

[0:09:58.8] RP: I love it. #entrepreneur.

[0:10:01.6] JH: Yeah, a lot of people don't realize that I used to have a lot of Hello Kitty stuff because there were some things that people just gifted to me. I actually saw the demand in my class and start selling it. I even repackage my Hello Kitty notebooks into packs of five pages, Saran wrapped that thing and sold it.

[0:10:18.1] CS: Oh my goodness, it's so good.

[0:10:20.2] JH: And that's only in elementary school. I didn't do much in middle school and I didn't do anything until I was like 17 again because I had AP class, again, the academic road that you have to take when you're in high school and everyone expects you to be like graduate the top of your class. But I realized that when we spent all academic years chasing that GPA, it actually means nothing in the real world.

[0:10:42.0] CS: Yeah, it's so interesting that you say that because it took me forever in my business to realize, I just need to focus on one result, that's it. If you want to have one client, you just have to find one person in this entire world that's willing to buy your services.

[0:10:57.5] JH: And someone will.

[0:10:59.3] CS: Yeah, and I love that you're saying this because it's the same thing and you know, with school, it's like, "What is the ultimate result right?" We focus so much on what's happening that we forget that in the mean time we've racked up student loan debt and a mortgage and all this other stuff. Maybe the end result for us is traveling around the country or the world? What is the minimum amount of effort or business that we need to make that a reality? It sounds like you've been able to do that.

What ways have your business given back to your life and how do you find yourself living today and maybe where do you see yourself at this young age in maybe for five years or something?

[0:11:37.9] JH: Well, my business has afforded me the freedom to pursue what I love to do every single day, and I'm able to give that same opportunity when I bring someone else on. I love the fact that I can give them the same advice because everyone on my team, also owns their own business.

The first thing they said to me was like, "I'm too scared to do it, I don't want to do it." I love being able to encourage them to pursue their own dream as well. My business has also afforded me the financial stability that I never had before. I'm able to have a house, I have my white space, I have my studio, like we talked about Reina. It's a lot of opportunities that I would have never had if I was still restricted by that nine to five job or that retail life.

[0:12:19.0] RP: Yeah, how did you get from, you lived at home and you were working from a non-studio to now you have a full home that you outfitted for the purpose of wanting your white space? How did you get there? What were the steps financially or planning or, you know, selling more products?

[0:12:42.3] JH: Well working with a girl with attachment issues because you were very important in all the steps I took, I think you gave me the encouragement I needed because I was still scared to really do more because at that point when I met you, I was just like buried in orders.

You met me when I was like not sleeping at all four hours a night, trying to process everything. You really helped me put in systems and processes in place to help me grow my business and come up with a more concrete plan of having that financial responsibility, setting up that — because financial are not ever fun to talk about — setting up that plan to get my white space. Because I used to work in a 10x10 room and my inventory used to be overflowing, it was awful.

[0:13:19.7] RP: Yeah, and now you have a beautiful space where you get to do your processing, designing, your art, all of that stuff, right?

[0:13:28.4] JH: It's still kind of surreal to me.

[0:13:30.0] RP: Yeah, I mean, you've really worked towards it though?

[0:13:33.4] JH: I realized that it's going to take all that hard work. I got to where I am because I worked really hard and I feel like that's not an excuse because I hate that some entrepreneurs believe that they just need one good product and they will make it, or that they just need an online presence but without any of the hard work.

[0:13:51.6] CS: So what happened right after that happened? What happens when you get that product? What have you found?

[0:13:56.9] JH: You have no foundation for your business, you didn't build a community, you just pitched a product and that's all there is, is a product. I just feel like that's not always the best way because you need that foundation, that community that will always stick with you. Most people buy from you because of your why and your mission. Not because of this one product. It's great that you made some money now, but it's not a long term income.

[0:14:19.9] RP: Yeah, for sure. Tell us about how you arrived at your, I mean, you have a product that's gone viral. So how do you go back to selling not just the products, but selling the culture?

[0:14:32.1] JH: I made that very clear like my products — when I created my products, a painted phone case and it was aesthetic, created connections. Like my favorite part is getting reviews from my customers that says, "You achieved your mission, I went to a coffee shop and worked today and people approached me and started talking to me. It started with your case but then we started talking about other things and connecting."

That's why I really wanted to do with my products, was bring that connection from offline into the real world. I feel like I can build a whole entire business off of that because it's not just one product, it's always going to be about connecting people to each other.

[0:15:04.1] CS: It's a brilliant business move, right? Because it's no longer about that one product. Anybody can copy a product, that's just a commodity. But when you have a — yeah, as you are probably well aware. You know, any time you build a whole community or a whole brand, whatever you want to call it around your mission and your purpose or your products, that can't be replicated, right?

That's why big companies are working so hard to pay influencers money to get in front of their platform because General Electric can't create the same kind of platform that somebody from the bachelorette, I don't know, who is a celebrity? I'm the worst with celebrities but you know, they can't just create that platform overnight. They have to rely on other people.

The community, the brand that you've created, people can copy your designs and copy your work but they can never copy that community, they can never copy that brand or that feeling or that experience that you're talking about. When did you realize this was really vital and what were some of the things that you've done to actively — I know you said you like connecting in person, so what are some things that you do to actively facilitate those engagements and to create that experience and build that brand outside of the internet?

[SPONSOR BREAK]

[0:16:33.4] CS: How would it feel if someone laid out a business plan, a road map or some kind of strategy that would get you started and get you closer to the goals that you dream of accomplishing in your business? Well, Reina and I actually have done this. All you have to do to get this totally free resource is head to creativeempire.co and click on “Free Workbook.”

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

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:17:02.0] JH: Well, it’s harder to build it off the internet. I do — I’m a hermit, I do work everything from my house and online. What we do is try to create a more online community because I didn’t find my community until I met Reina like all the creative communities from the Heart Centered Biz Boss and Savvy, Rising Tide and having virtual coffee dates has been game changing. What we have done to implement that same feeling you get when you just connect with someone is create prompts within our social media.

So our social media is not just about aesthetics and pretty pictures. “Oh, look at this laptop case that we’re trying to promote to you.” It’s more of getting that picture to attract them but the prompt inside it is when we actually have always a call to action, we ask them how their day is, we ask them what motivates them. It’s very engaging prompts and we love it when they not only connect with us but they connect with each other in the comments. So we’re very intentional on how we plan out our feed based on the captions.

[0:17:55.8] CS: What makes a good caption? I think captions are the hardest thing to do on Instagram.

[0:17:59.4] JH: Yes.

[0:18:01.7] CS: Anybody can find some pictures, whatever but man, coming up with the captions, do you do them ahead of time? How do you come up with enough content? How do

you not copy other people? There's so many things that go into it. So what are you find that is resonating and do you have like a formula? Or basically help us.

[0:18:21.9] JH: I'm actually not an expert in this in any way. I actually hired a brand manager, Kenzie. She has been phenomenal in helping me really carry my brand voice consistently on Instagram, because I can give the general idea but captions, I was that girl that only did emoji's and only emoji's, and maybe one or two words, "Oh, how cute emoji." For her, she really thought in depth of how we wanted to connect with our community and mixing that worth real stories.

Unfortunately there is no recipe because it is about how authentic you want to be and how much of your real life and personality and business you want to show to everyone. I know, there is like no secret sauce because I asked someone this the other day. I was like, "How did you grow your Instagram?" She's like, "I was just me," and I'm like, "What does that mean?" She's like, "Just be you."

She actually gave me one interesting piece of advice. She's like, "Whatever pops in your head type it as a caption, post the story in Instagram." Actually you might know Paper and Honey, Laura, because Reina has made her my accountability buddy and she has been so awesome. Everyone loves her posts because she's so funny.

Like she went to the movie and she was like this little old lady who was just trying to go to the movie. It's just the way her personality is, what attracts everyone to her and she was just like, "Honestly I just type like I am typing to my best friend and whatever pops in my head, I am typing that up." I'm like, "Oh, that can be interesting sometimes."

[0:19:42.8] RP: Yeah, Christina loves Laura.

[0:19:44.7] CS: Yeah, I am obsessed with Laura and I think she is more funny than most comedians.

[0:19:49.5] JH: She really is and she was just like, "You know what? Just say the first thing that comes to your head."

[0:19:54.8] CS: Yeah, she was also on our show and I'm not going to remember what episode it was but if you guys want, her episode is not the funniest tidbit of Laura that she's ever created but it is actually really helpful especially if you are trying to figure out how to get yourself out there and position yourself differently than the other people in your industry.

But I love what you are saying that there is no secret sauce because man, I just remember thinking everybody else that has "made it" figured out the secret and I just didn't figure that secret out yet and it probably took me about two years to figure out that there is no secret. They're just working really hard.

[0:20:30.1] JH: I realized that they're just comfortable with putting themselves out there. I realized that is probably the big difference between small influencers and big influences in their caption. They just don't care about what other people think, so they are going to put everything out there.

[0:20:44.6] RP: Yeah and I think too that you hate your stride in finding the people that you're talking to and that's a constant work in progress and I know you've worked really hard for that. Another thing that's changed in your business is that in the time that I've known you, you went from being a huge Etsy seller to switching to your own platform. What has that done for you?

[0:21:06.4] JH: Etsy has its own search engine, so it's easy to be highly ranked in Etsy. But owning your own website is a whole different monster to tackle because you don't have that natural traffic from Etsy. You actually have to build your brand for your own website. So that has really taught me a lot about marketing and how to stay on top of it and how to not get lazy with your website.

You always have to constantly update it and it's always a learning process. It's not easy. I wish I could say it's easy but having an Etsy and a website made me realize all these different things I'm missing that I needed to learn. So it's always a constant learning.

[0:21:40.9] CS: Yeah, it's definitely a debate that I see a lot of people with Etsy shops, at a certain point they feel like they have to move off of Etsy. It's interesting to hear you talk about it, I would love to know what was the impetus for you to get off at Etsy? Was it an increased

revenue or you didn't want to be on there anymore? You didn't have to compete in that market place? What compelled you to make the switch?

[0:22:09.3] JH: Lack of brand recognition because I wanted a business that was going to be bigger than Etsy and if I wanted that, I needed to control the way my brand was represented. Because Etsy is for, I don't want to say — it is a handcrafted market, but Etsy has its own different style of selling and the audience that it attracts and that isn't always necessary my audience.

I feel like having your own website, you have control of not just your brand but people recognize you and they know you enough to go to your website and that's how you start building your community through brand recognition and Etsy takes that away from you because I've met people whose like, "Oh I got this from an Etsy shop," I'm like, "No, you got that from me," like they will tag Etsy instead of my shop and I realized that because there's thousands, you know there is 1.7 million — I just read that number somewhere, 1.7 million shops you are competing with on Etsy.

So I decided to move away because, like I said, I wanted a bigger business than Etsy. I didn't want just to be known as the Etsy shop that makes cute laptop cases or that hand painted phone case. I want to have more than that.

[0:23:11.3] RP: Yeah, I actually met somebody who had Janet's case and I have one of her cases and I met many people who have your case.

[0:23:19.6] JH: Oh really?

[0:23:21.8] RP: Yeah and I'm like, "Where did you get this?" and they'll be like, "I got it on Etsy" I was like, "No, you got it from Janet," and I let people know.

[0:23:28.7] JH: Oh I love that. Thank you so much. But when people say, "I got a Janet Gwen case," it has a different feeling than when you hear someone whose like, "I got this from Etsy," and you'd be thinking, "Well that's my case," but hey, they still bought but the meaning behind it, it makes it so much more worthwhile when they know your name.

[0:23:47.9] CS: How do you help facilitate that brand recognition if you are on Etsy and looking to move off of it? I know I've purchased a lot of stuff through Etsy and I've gotten new things like — what's that?

[0:23:59.7] JH: I know you don't remember the name.

[0:24:01.0] CS: I don't, yeah. Unless it was — yeah, you're right. I don't remember the name and I have to go back in my order history to look at who I ordered it and to buy some more of that product or whatever, and so what are some things that you did to help facilitate that? Did you mail something in your cases to let them know? Did you give them a coupon? How did that happen or did you just go cold turkey?

[0:24:24.3] JH: I did go cold turkey in the beginning because when I said I was grounding at orders, I meant like everything was being done just by me. I didn't really have the help I needed until February of last year when I hired a VA to take over my emails because I was spending a good five hours a day because I wanted that one on one conversation with each and every one of my costumers but was that realistic for me to handle by myself? Not at all.

But once I had a VA on, the way that I make sure that everyone remembers who I am is business cards, calling cards, anything that goes in, like the whole packaging in general was branded to Janet Gwen Designs. It was not Etsy. It wasn't orange, it was my branding color and my brand aesthetic and in it I was like, "Be sure to tag us on Instagram because we love to see your hustle," just a call to action to really get them off of the Etsy onto Instagram or having them connect with us.

[0:25:15.0] RP: Yeah for sure and I think too, you really started working on the list side too. So not just converting them to Instagram, but having a strategy around how do I get people on a list? Because the list is really valuable. We've talked about it in different episodes and Christina and I both believe this to be true, that our list is the only place that we can really control the output of the information and the way that we can do it, right?

[0:25:39.2] JH: Oh I agree. Email lists do have a higher conversation rate than any of the others. So I have been building it by phone but I had a little bit of difficulty with it because of my lack of consistency. So I feel like that's a whole another beast that really does need to be tackled but I do agree that the list is honestly the key to really getting those sells because like you said, it's your own platform and people know who they're subscribing to, hopefully.

[0:26:04.0] RP: Well thanks so much for saying that. Consistency is hard and just things aren't perfect because I think we have a lot of guests on our show who really seem to have it all figured out. Everything that they did wrong is in the past and currently everything is peachy and you're bringing a whole new light in terms of sometimes it's difficult and sometimes it's not always consistent and we can still figure it out, so I appreciate your take on it.

[0:26:30.2] JH: Absolutely, yeah because I think the reason why I also made it as an entrepreneur is because I'm not afraid of failure or my mistakes. My mistakes don't define me or make me. I feel like I can only grow from my mistakes and learn from that and keep going. Most people get discouraged and I am like, "Why? Why stop if you're already halfway there?"

[0:26:50.6] CS: Yeah, actually I think a lot of people are enamored with the idea of having a business, but not actually having a business and I call it the Barnes & Noble syndrome. I have this problem where I go into Barnes & Noble and I'm enamored with the idea of reading all the books that I pick up and I love the fact that I would know about the topic or the novel or whatever subject the book is covering. But then I buy the books and they sit on the shelf and I never read them.

So I think it's similar with our businesses where people get really enamored like, "I could have this business and I could travel," and you forget that there's no one there at the end of the line saying, "Hey Janet, today you are going to work on these three things and this is the outcome that we're expecting." You have to create that and it's just too hard for a lot of people.

So I love that you are saying to lean onto your mistakes, learn from them. Don't care, really. Because if you have to care about all the mistakes that you make, you're never going to make it as a business owner. It's impossible, especially where you're coming from, it sounds like you didn't have any experience, you had all of these obstacles to overcome and if you had just let

those stand in your way, you wouldn't be viral products and your own shop and your own community.

If someone is really on the fence about having a business, what encouragement and what discouragement would you give them? How would someone know that having a business, maybe stepping away from a full-time job, how would they know, in your opinion, if that's the right decision for them?

[0:28:23.4] JH: That's a really good question because I've always the one that's always encouraging and saying, "Why not? Go ahead and do it." Like, "You should pursue your passion." But I do actually see your point because that's a really good analogy that everyone wants a business. They think it's glamorous but I feel like it's not a good decision for you if you don't have the time commitment or willing to put in all the hard work and if you don't know something, be willing to learn and admit when you don't know something.

Another problem that millennials, unfortunately, face is that we think we know everything. Or that we're not very open to suggestions or just learning in general and I feel like that can be a downfall of anyone who wants to be an entrepreneur because there's so much that you have to learn and you don't know everything. So if you want the right mind frame to be an entrepreneur is that you have to be ready to learn consistently stay learning, want to be challenged and commit to those maybe 20 hour work day sometimes.

And maybe you never get a wink of sleep but that's part of the job description and you have to realize that like you said, there is no one at the end of the line to tell me, "Hey I have to do this. I have to do that." You also have to be able to have the self-discipline to get what's needed done at the end of the day.

[0:29:37.4] RP: Mic drop. Yeah, I mean we don't hear that enough. We hear "it's easy to be an entrepreneur, you can make a living doing anything, you can live on the beach", whatever and it's such a triggering one for me. Like, yeah, I can live on the beach but how much am I going to really work then? And I think that that message does our entrepreneur community a really big disservice. It does take a lot of hustle and a lot of tears in the background that people don't necessarily get to hear about or see. So thanks for unveiling that part of the business.

[0:30:12.0] JH: Oh yes, it's not pretty. My boyfriend has found me underneath my desk a couple of times because I was hiding from literally my inventory piles stack high. I couldn't catch a break sometimes during holidays, so I would just hide underneath my desk, my puppies will come join me sometimes. It happens, but if you can't handle all of that, I wouldn't recommend being an entrepreneur and I would only discourage them, again, only if they wouldn't put in the hard work because it does take a lot of discipline.

[0:30:36.9] RP: I love that self-discipline point. What do you do to take care of yourself? Because you said you were a hermit and you sometimes can be found under your desk, so how do you take care of yourself to counteract that stuff?

[0:30:51.6] JH: I actually really enjoy what I do, so self-care for me can be learning more from my business. I love reading business books like right now I am really obsessed with *DotCom Secrets* by Russell Brunson. I just love what I do that I really don't take a break from it. I worked until 12 last night because I wanted to. So I am not the best for self-care.

[0:31:14.6] RP: One thing that we haven't even mentioned is that your business on that. So do you want to tell us a little bit of that side as well?

[0:31:22.0] JH: Well that was actually an intentional way of mocking traffic from because I realized that I was running that separately because there's another passion project of mine but it didn't make any sense to run it independently. I work with a lot of influencers from my business alone. I was like, "Okay, why don't I become influential myself and complete that flow of traffic from the fashion blog to my website, my website back to my fashion blog?"

But most people don't realize that Janet Gwen Designs is owned by Janet Gwen even though it's mentioned several times on our blog. But I wanted to nurture all points of traffic into a flow. So that's why I really have my fashion blog, it's not only to really pursue that other passion of mine, but also to incorporate my products into it as well in a lifestyle way because I wanted to be that lifestyle brand and I felt like that gave a different perspective to my actual business.

[0:32:07.8] CS: Yeah, thank you. That's so interesting and that's one thing, a unique opportunity to have is to decide how we are going to, if we are going to start a second thing, if we are going to blend it all together. I mean obviously back when you started that wasn't maybe what you were thinking about, but if you were to go back to day one and maybe like day 372 because we had a couple of iterations of day one, right?

But in the beginning of your business, when you were looking towards the future, what did you see your creative empire looking like? Has that followed through or have you exceeded your expectations?

[0:32:51.3] JH: I honestly think that it has exceeded my expectations. I would have not imagined that I would have a house with a studio that takes up half of my house by the time I was 22. I didn't think that I would be able to do what I love so soon. I was groomed for that nine to five, I was ready for that nine to five, at least I thought so because obviously that did not work out so well.

But I think it has exceeded my expectation in every way because not only do I do what I love, I get to connect with other creatives, and that is what's so good for my heart and soul. I went to Inspire Retreat, I never have been happier to connect with other likeminded individuals. I actually felt more at home there than anywhere else because I realized, "This is what I love to do."

So it had definitely exceeded my expectation and I do envision my empire expanding way more. Just slowly but surely because I want to make sure that each step that I do, I do it right. And then I move on because I don't want to expand too quick where the foundation ends up falling or just one step just ends up falling because I feel like that could just break it.

[0:33:51.8] CS: Yeah, for sure. So where can people find you and all of your empires?

[0:33:56.6] JH: Well actually janetgwen.com is my fashion blog and Janet Gwen Designs is my website and finally, I also have a YouTube channel. Yeah, I conquered that fear this year.

[0:34:08.7] CS: That's fantastic. What about your other social?

[0:34:11.2] JH: I can be found on Instagram @janetgwendesigns with an S, Pinterest without the S because too many characters, and Facebook with an S.

[0:34:21.5] CS: That's awesome. Thank you so much for joining us Janet and everybody out there, get rid of your excuses and go build your creative empire.

[0:34:29.3] JS: Thank you so much for having me.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:34:33.0] 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]