

EPISODE 112

[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] CS: Hello, welcome back to another episode of the Creative Empire Podcast. I'm Christina Scalera, joined by Reina Pomeroy and today, our guest is Carly Romeo. Yes, like Romeo and Juliet. She is a photographer, feminist and serial project starter but we're really excited to talk to her today because she is a disruptor.

So Carly, would you mind giving us some background on how you got here? Because I could sit here, I could read your bio, which is so interesting and goes down so many different avenues but we would love to know from you here today for our audience, what got you into what you're doing today? How did you decide to choose such a fantastic and unique niche?

[0:01:18.7] CR: Well, thank you for having me on your podcast, this is really exciting for me. It's hard to know really where to start, where the beginning is but when I was in college, I was in the architecture school and I hated it, desperately hated it. So I dropped out and I ended up changing my major to women studies. I made that decision because I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do after college, I kind of didn't have many role models of my own, of people who are out of college doing creative things or doing interesting things, I just knew I had to go to college so that's where I was.

I started asking around the people that I did I know saying like, "What did you study in college, what was your interest and is it related to what you do now?" And almost universally, the people that I spoke with were like, "No, it doesn't really matter if I study. You'll find your path." So I

switched to women studies which is what I was doing a lot of my extracurricular work around because I've always been a feminist and raised by a feminist mom and all that.

So I studied feminism, I left school with a degree in feminism essentially, women studies and after that, I kind of went directly into what you know, you assume a feminist would do. I worked at planned parenthood, I worked with a couple of different non-profits and I ended up working on the staff of Gloria Steinem, which is amazing and she's great. But after a while there, I started to realize I couldn't be an assistant my whole life, which is — I mean, being an assistant is awesome but I wanted to move forward but nobody really is like, "Congrats, you're promoted to being Gloria Steinem."

So I started dabbling around in photography and for a while, it was a little bit confusing to me how I was going to make money doing photography and I realized I jumped the gun there but I realized that I had to go weddings, which is not really your first thought I guess when you think about doing feminist work. So I started doing weddings and I promised myself that the only way that I do them is if I was able to stick to my political beliefs and stick to my passions and be really open about it.

When I first started doing it, I wrote this big manifesto about how I'm a feminist and how that influences my work and how it could potentially serve the clients that I wanted to serve and I remember just like hitting publish on that blog post and being like, "Well, this is probably the end of my non-existent career." But it ended up working really well.

[0:03:37.2] CS: Yeah, what happened?

[0:03:39.4] CR: It worked fantastically! People came from all corners and people were just like, "We've been wanting this," you know? I myself when I had what we call love party, my partner and I, we tried to find a photographer and everyone we spoke to was just very intent on this like kind of bizarre narrative about how this is the best day of your life, you've been dreaming about this day since you were a girl, you finally found someone to nail down or whatever it is. It was just very weird and uncomfortable and not true to my partnership, you know?

So I decided to be that person, honestly, just to be a photographer who is not going to be doting on the bride on how delicate and perfect and ethereal and angelic she is and then the groom just being like an accessory. Or also working with couples that aren't just a bride and a groom. It was really scary and I felt like when I published that piece, I could just hear all of these brides like running away, just stampede of rejection. But it ended up working really well.

The people who emailed me, I had my first couple that I ever shot who I never met before who cold emailed me or found me online or whatever, they were two brides, they were both in the military, they emailed me and they were like, "We are so excited to find you, we love your work," and they said, "You're the only photographer we could find in the area who had any same sex couples on their site at all."

I just remember really feeling that for them and realizing that it must be so hard to go through this process and have to navigate through a narrative that's very boy meets girl, boy proposes, heteronormative and not really know who to work with and who to find and then I'm trying to be the beacon that's like, "Hey, it doesn't have to be like that, I'm here for you, if you just want to get married in your back yard, I'm here for you if you want to elope and then have a barbeque. I'm here for you if you want to throw out any of those things that you're supposed to do."

So that's how I started with my photography business and a few years later I've met my Catalyst cofounder Liz Susong, who had written an article about her feminist wedding on Off Beat Bride, and I emailed her immediately and I was like, "This article is great, do you want to talk about this? You're the only other person I've seen who is talking about feminism and weddings. I'm desperate for colleagues in this fight and I really want to meet you."

So we got together and then we ended up starting a website and a magazine and that's where we're at right now. We have a website, a magazine, Catalyst does an event, which is how I met Reina, I think?

[0:06:21.0] RP: Yeah, that's how I met you.

[0:06:23.1] CR: Then I also do photography.

[0:06:25.0] RP: Still doing photography!

[0:06:25.8] CS: Wow, it's great. It's so funny because I love what you said about the bride's running in the other direction. I love talking about business sales and the number one thing that people have a problem with is figuring out how to ostracize entire populations of people. Because it's just not anything that we've ever grown up with right?

You grow up, you go to school, you're supposed to fit in, bad behavior is punished and it's kind of bad behavior, it's definitely disruptive and against the norm to basically put out a stand, especially something as strong as a manifesto and say, "I'm not serving these people. You can go somewhere else for that, you're not going to work with me."

Was it just like something — I feel like in a way, you had an advantage because it sounds like it was visceral where other people maybe don't have that visceral feeling towards a population or whatever. But then, how can someone emulate that kind of passion and how can they give themselves really, it sounds like permission to do what they want to do even if no one else is doing it.

[0:07:34.1] CR: Doing it when no one else is doing it is terrifying. I don't want to gloss over that at all. I remember when I was doing research for this piece that I wrote, I Googled "feminist wedding photography" and Google came up with nothing which is nothing is eerier than Googling something and getting literally no results.

That to me, I had to really process and think about, "Does this mean that nobody wants it or does it mean that nobody is doing it?" But, you know, since then other wedding professionals that I know have all kind of become outspoken about this topic and I don't think it necessarily has to be something that nobody else is doing when it is something no one else is doing.

Like I said, it's really scary but I think for me, I knew that I had to do weddings to make money as a photographer. I was teaching myself photography and teaching myself business all at once but I knew that the benefit of having your own business and having your own project is that you dictate what your rules are. You dictate what your business philosophies are, you dictate who you work with.

That's the beauty of the entire system is that you get to decide what you're doing. So I just have to think really hard about how would it feel for me to have to do the whole like father giving away a thing, it's just very typical wedding and I knew that that would be really hard for me and that I wouldn't do that great of a job at it.

I think it's really about figuring out what's going to make you so happy, what's going to really feed you emotionally. Everyone's got to pay their bills too, so I don't want to seem like it's an endorsement of when religious people are like, "I don't shoot gay weddings because Jesus," or whatever. It is really scary to narrow down your audience that way and to kind of like you said, ostracize people, or not ostracize but sort of like repel them. Repel the people that you don't want, which will help you attract the people you do want and that it's really scary.

I think that it takes a lot of soul searching and a of thinking about what kind of work is going to really make you happy, what kind of work is going to feed your emotional self. What's going to feed your passions, in addition to what's going to pay your bills? Because the beauty of owning your own business is that you get to make all the rules, you get to decide who your clients are, you get to decide how you do things and what kind of work you produce and for whom.

The only person standing in your way of that is yourself. So I think one of the first things is that you have to know how much you need to actually get paid and when to hold off, everyone's booked clients that they regret booking, including me. Even with my sort of like filter for whether or not they're feminine or identify as feminists. But you have to be able to know when to say no to people or when to refer the work to someone else.

Just you have to be comfortable with that in knowing what's a good fit. But really just, it takes a lot of thinking about what kind of thing you want to produce, what sort of — what do you want to be known for, what do you want to create? And if other people are creating similar stuff, that doesn't mean that you can't do it, which is a big hard one for me. At first I didn't even want to start photography because I was like, I remember one time I was talking to Gloria about it and I was like, "I don't know, I think maybe I want to be a photographer sort of. I rented a camera a couple of times and then I'm kind of interested in it but I don't know?"

I kept on being like, “People,” — I remember the thing that kept getting to me was other people are ahead of me. Other people have been doing photography longer or other people are more talented. She was like, “That doesn’t — so what? That’s true of anything, just start doing it and realizing that that doesn’t mean that you’re pushy or like too much or whatever, it just means that you know what you want,” and sometimes you don’t know what you want but you know what you don’t want.

That works fine as well and that kind of circles back to the idea of repelling folks as like, I know that I would prefer not to shoot weddings in churches. I have shot wedding in churches, I love some weddings that I shot that are in churches, but it’s not really my preference, it’s not my first choice. So on my website, you don’t see as many weddings in churches just because that’s not my number one choice. So kind of like whittling away what you don’t want can also be a helpful exercise into kind of positioning yourself into what you do want.

[0:12:03.8] RP: Yeah, and I think that we talk a lot about this niching thing but what you’re talking about is like getting back to your values, what’s most important and how you want to run your business and making decisions from there rather than looking around at everyone else and saying, “What can I do similarly to them?” Because I think when you’re starting a business.

Not everyone is courageous as Carly and does it, and just try something brand new but I think that people look around and say, “What’s already working for people?” I think that’s the standard of starting something and you really started at the angle of this, “this is really freaking scary but this is how I want to run my business”.

Can you walk us through a little bit of that mindset? Yes, it’s scary but you weren’t willing to compromise on those things that were important to you.

[0:12:53.2] CR: Yeah, I mean, where do you even start? So I live in the south, all of the stuff that I’m saying about traditional weddings is double or triple strength here in the south and I don’t know, I think it’s just engrained. Like it’s just part of me that I have feminist beliefs that I think that we need to prioritize diversity, representation, and there’s just really no other way of thinking about it for me.

So instead of figuring out like how I can apply that, it was more like “how can I exist in this space that I want to be in that doesn’t really seem to have room for what I’m trying to do?” The only way that there’s ever going to be room in this space where there’s not room for you is if you make it, really. I figured I would try it out and if it doesn’t work, then it doesn’t work and you try something else.

I think one of the most valuable skills that an entrepreneur can have is sort of being able to adapt to what is working and what’s not. It old myself, you know, if all of those stampeding brides, stampeding away really go away and there’s no one else left standing at the end then I would figure out another angle. But I think in terms of the politics, it never really was a question.

I feel bad that I don’t have a good answer, but I think that we all have this beliefs and this places that we come from and we bring that with us and so maybe somebody out here is trying to be a wedding photographer but they’re divorced and they feel like, “I could never be a wedding photographer successfully because I’m divorced and this isn’t an okay thing to be in this space.”

There are people out there who are looking for wedding photographers who are getting married for the second time. When they see a wedding photographer who says, “Hey, I’m doing wedding photography and it might be weird but I’ve divorced and here’s how I feel about wedding photography now and here’s how I feel about weddings now. I know that it’s complicated and I’m here for you.” All of those couples who are going into their not first marriage are going to feel connected to that person.

So I think for me it was really imagine the person on the other side, imagine the person on the other side of the screen who is really feeling uncomfortable about whatever position they’re in, who maybe they want some stationary and they don’t like the frothy calligraphy stuff and they want something bold and they’re just looking and looking and they don’t see anything.

When you are that person, when you think from that person’s perspective, I think it makes it a lot easier to jump in and try to offer them the service that they’re looking for because you know that it’s desperately needed.

[0:15:38.9] RP: Yeah, and something that I love about what you just said is that when there's not something out there for you, you create it and I think that's what you've done with your photography business, it's what you've done with Catalyst.

Catalyst is a magazine for disrupters in the wedding industry and it's why I went to {un} convention in the first place and met you for the first time. Can you talk a little bit about that, actually? Can you tell us a little bit about how it came about?

[0:16:04.5] CR: Yeah, when we started catalyst we were like, all right, here we are, we're feminist in the wedding industry, we're going to make space for that and we're going to be disruptors and talk about feminism. We kind of had this problem where we were trying to talk it to different audiences, we're trying to talk to couples or other folks that are interested in weddings just like from a consumer angle and then we're trying to talk to professionals.

In order to kind of help clarify the distinction there, we decided to do an event and so we put together an event, it's called {un}convention, it's a conference, one day conference that travels around the world and they invite all these people from everywhere from things and share photographers, planners, big gurus, all those types of people and they come together and we talk about how can we put the nation forward in the industry. How can we build community together to affect this type of change?

We've done it four times and the last time was in November at Leclerc, which is here in Richmond. It's a hotel and that's where I met you and we're doing it next month in London, which is going to be...

[0:17:22.1] RP: So exciting.

[0:17:23.0] CR: Really fun. Yeah, we're doing it in collaboration with a blog called Nu Bride and the new bride and the editor there is named Nova Reed and she is an absolute genius. She's wonderful and she reached out to us or we reached out to her I can't remember. Basically we were like, "Is this conversation needed in the UK?" And she was like, "Yes."

Basically we just try to create an empowering space though for the different wedding pros to feel a little bit more connected to one another, and like I said, finding ways to work together to increase diverse representation in the wedding media.

[0:17:59.6] RP: I think you're talking about things that are sometimes really hard for people to hear and we hit publish on that thing. No matter whether it's politically charged or personally charged, there's some kind of emotion around it and I'd love to hear, I have my way of doing it and whatever I tell myself when I hit publish on that thing but what do you do to encourage yourself to say like, "This is the right thing to do and I need to press that now," or whatever. It doesn't have to be any particular context but I'm curious about you have said hard things and I am wondering what your mindset has been to actually execute on that thing?

[0:18:37.5] CR: Yeah, I think for one thing being a feminist has primed me to know that I have unpopular opinion sometimes and then I have arguments or haters. So that has primed me but I think, like I was saying before, I try to think about the people who I know that are out there who are looking for that connection because I was that person and I try to really summon up a lot of compassion for that person and try to trust that they will come across it if they need it.

Because, like I said, we were trying to find a photographer and it was just cringe worthy awful like, "Oh, let me see your ring." It was just a real oppressive narrative that we didn't fit into, and if I had found a person like myself at that time, it would have felt so relieving and so uplifting and so right that I try to share that. If someone wants to share something about their personal life, I think that I understand that that is also hard. Things like health issues or work or having depression, divorce like I was just saying before.

Or I have a friend who just had a miscarriage and that's something that people really don't talk about. It's true that there is a lot of things that are not shared as much as they should be and I think as long as you share them in an authentic way then you are going to find other people that connect with it and that needed to hear that and you'll help them feel not quite as alone.

So I just try to think about those people that I'm going to reach and if there's haters and there's been haters. There's people who comment on my pictures of same sex couples like, "Ugh this

isn't right," or whatever, there's the haters but in feminist world if there's haters that means you are doing something right.

[SPONSOR BREAK]

[0:20:34.9] 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 or get you closer to the goals that you dream of accomplishing in your business? Well, Reina and I actually have done this. So 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]

[0:21:18.7] CS: I think in business world too, it tells me that you are connecting with the audience that you are trying to connect to because the other people are not connecting with you. I remember my first hateful blog comment, I was actually really excited one, because it meant people are actually looking at my blog and then two, there was a population that I was not resonating with, which was good because I meant that I was resonating with a different population.

So it sounds, to me, as you are saying this, no matter what you believe in or what your background is or what unique experiences you're bringing to the table, it sounds like one of the things that's made you so successful is that you've been really intentional about cultivating your message and the message that you present on your platforms. So no matter what, obviously not everybody that listens to this show has the same message otherwise we'd be interviewing everybody. Your message is unique to you and your platform.

So what could help people in crafting that intentionality and where could they find some examples maybe of really intentional messages either on your platforms or other platforms? I think Off Beat Bride is a really good one that you mentioned earlier. That's a very unique bridal

platform and they used to have a show even, right? They had their own wedding show and that was so different than anything you would find.

It's not like at a Marriott, it's not tables and tables of wedding vendors. They would have it really cool like loft, warehouse spaces and had different kinds of vendors. I remember when they visited Atlanta, they actually had a burlesque show, right? So that's very different than your typical wedding show. But if you are crafting that kind of intentionality, what are some examples?

Because this is the number one thing I see people struggling with right now when I am working with people is like, they think that they are being really authentic, they think they are being very intentional and they end up because maybe they're scared they end up sounding like everybody else.

So for example, "I want to work with brides who have a really modern bright fresh aesthetic," I don't know what that means. You know what I mean? And I truly believe that people are definitely trying to be unique and set themselves apart, but that's not the same thing as saying like I am a feminist wedding photographer, right? That's a very unique angle.

[0:23:45.2] CR: Yeah, well it's not that folks should scrap that part. I think that the aesthetic look and sensibility stuff is really helpful especially in an industry that's as visually focused as weddings. But I think that it really takes a super deep dive into who that person should be in business running all of this and they told us, "You know identify your target client. What do they look like? What do they listen to?" And I remember feeling like that that was very abstract.

I was kind of like, "Well I don't know? How am I supposed to know what they listen to or whatever?" But if you think about it, there's a way to describe the person that you want to work with really fun almost like literary styles details about who they are because when you say, "Oh I am interested in working with brides who are modern and have a bright aesthetic, and clean or bright and colorful and all of that," that is a subset of people for sure and you're going to get all the moody dark brides going away from there.

You're going to get maybe some of the rustic brides running away from that person. But the subset of bright and colorful is still really, really big. For me, I like to frame it in terms of partnership. So I'm a feminist and some people identify with that word, some people not. But I like to say I care more about partnership and about what your partnership is like, what are the dynamics of it? Who is the big spoon, who is the little spoon? Who cooks and who cleans? Do you work on projects together? Where do you like to travel to?

I really try to focus on people's dynamic as a couple and so maybe that's a qualifying element. Maybe there's things like attitude towards the relationship. What do they do in their spare time? What's their favorite TV shows? Even something like that, what's your favorite music? What do you like to do on a weekend? Those kinds of things can be peppered in and say, "I'm trying to work with brides who have modern aesthetic, who are bright, who's favorite place to travel in the world is the beach."

Whatever those things are, and then put that on there and talk to those people. So in all of their post, maybe they want to work with someone who is bright and airy but they really like working with couples where if there is a woman in the couple, she's really good at her job and she's really professional minded and that's the kind of person they want to work with, someone who's a career woman.

Or maybe they want to work with someone who's like really into being a mom or really caring or really gentle. In order to find your people, you have to dig really deeply into who they are beyond what their aesthetic is, because especially in weddings your aesthetic is not really that meaningful even though it's — I mean you can call anything modern at this point in terms of weddings. Anything could be modern. The new swoopy calligraphy is really modern.

Or IKEA style like white everywhere, Scandinavian look is really modern. But it's more about what kind of person are they, what are they value? And that way when those people come to your site, they read about your work or they look on your Instagram and they feel like you're literally talking exactly to them. Those people will end up being the customers or the clients that really care about your work. They'd pay anything for your work or not anything, but those tend to be the more motivated people the more specifically you can break it down.

[0:27:31.5] CS: Yeah. Go for it, the specific thing is so important.

[0:27:37.5] CR: Yeah and I was just going to add with things like marriage equality and LGBTQ rights and all that stuff, and with some of these other details that you find, if the person reading your site or if the person looking at your brand doesn't necessarily identify with that but knows someone who does or loves that thing.

So say I'm like, "Oh, you know, I am looking for brides who really love visiting the Momma." Maybe I don't go to the Momma but my best friend who lives in New York goes to the Momma all the time. You're not only necessarily talking to those specific people but you are talking to their very close circle. It's not always as tiny as you would think.

But when I say, "I shoot all weddings. I love same sex couples and I tell the story about working with the two brides," like working with my same sex clients, I am not only talking to same sex clients. I'm also talking to friends of same sex clients, family members of the same sex clients. People who care about same sex folks. So it seems like you are really narrowing it down when really you are narrowing it and also everyone in their orbit is also going to feel connected.

[0:28:47.6] RP: Yeah because I think what you are saying is when you pick that thing to be really concrete about people are like, "Oh Carly is the person I call when I need this thing," right? Instead of, "Oh let me go through my rolodex of Instagram people that do similar things." It's like, "Carly is the person that I know. Maybe she's not the exact right fit for the thing but she will know somebody, or she is the right person," or whatever and I think just being known for one thing or a concrete specific number of things, is really helpful.

[0:29:18.6] CS: I must reference Jonah Berger's book *Contagious* on every episode, but it has so many good points and one of them is people get really excited to share a good resource. Nobody wants to share the crappy burger place in town, but they are excited to share the new, fun, really cool, cheap, very good tasting burger place and so when you get that specific and they are excited to share that with their friends, it happens over and over again, which sounds like that's what happened to you, Carly.

[0:29:49.9] CR: Yeah, it definitely is because as soon as you find it, it's a flash of connection. It's a moment of connection and then so and so's bridesmaid is also a feminist and felt weird about being a bridesmaid but she did it for her friend and now she's going to have a wedding that's even more off the wall and it really does grow. It's just a matter of figuring out who that person is and I will say, one of the scary things is feeling like you can't change it but you can.

So I don't think I'll ever move away from the feminism piece, but right now on my website, on the front page it says, "I'm passionate about a lot of things. My favorite couples to work with care about Black Lives Matter, they care about climate change, they're really good at their jobs, they consider themselves as creative but not super artsy," and those things can all change. I can change any of that so it doesn't have to be a forever thing, you know?

So if you're like, "I really want to work with people who love reading books because those types of people are so down to earth and they really are smart" and whatever it is, you can change that. If you say that for two months you can change it, it's your business. You could do whatever you want. You're not going to get someone who's like, "Um hello. I am writing you this email because I noticed that you changed your website two months ago away from Biblio files," you know? You can change it. You could play with it until it works.

[0:31:19.6] RP: I love it. I think it conjured an image for me. I don't know if you guys know Calligraphy Nerd, Andrea, she has a calligraphy Instagram feed that's beautiful. She has thousands and thousands of followers, but her thing that she recently found is that she loves Harry Potter and so she does calligraphy around Harry Potter and that's her brand. It's so on point and yeah, I just love when people get real specific and are known for that thing.

It's like, if you like Harry Potter, you have to know who this person is or whatever your brand ends up being in and on the more political side, even if you have a shop if you feel like you're — I know a couple product based shops that are on Etsy or on other platforms, actually this print that is behind me is by Manayunk Calligraphy and she does some political stuff and Jessie from Just Follow Your Art does the political stuff.

And people are courageous enough to say the thing that they believe in and hope that people will follow and buy their thing because that thing is just as important to them. So I think that we

just have to be courageous enough to say the things that we believe in and hope that with the best intentions. Not to hurt anybody but with the best intentions.

[0:32:25.6] CR: Right like I said, to find the people who are waiting for that. To find the people who are uncomfortable, they're feeling like they're not being seen and to find them and be like, "Hey, you in the back, I do see you. I agree with you, and I know that it's very unpopular but I'm just going to come on out there and say it, "I have your back" and then more and more people will pop and say, "Me too."

[0:32:50.6] RP: Yeah, one thing that I've learned in my business is that every single person no matter where they come from, their political background, their upbringing, whatever, I think every single person just wants to be heard and understood and validated and when we can do that for one person with the platform that we have and leverage that, I think it's really a powerful thing.

I so appreciate you sharing this and saying the things that might be hard, that might be hard for people to hear but no matter what whether you align yourself with being a feminist or not, I think there's something in this message for everybody that we have to be courageous enough to say the thing that we believe in because there is somebody who needs to hear the message.

[0:33:32.3] CR: Absolutely.

[0:33:33.1] CS: So Carly, going back to day one when you were still working, you're still interning, still working for some non-profits and for Gloria Steinem and that kind of thing, what advice would you have looking forward?

[0:33:45.7] CR: I think the biggest thing for me, the mental block that I had to get past was that I thought that because I went to college, because I was a smart person, I worked hard that I needed to have a "real job" and I actually had a "real job" after college at a non-profit and it was a nightmare. I was way overworked, I was way underpaid, I ended up having to get a second job. It was a mess and on paper it was a dream job because I was working at a youth center that cater to queer youth, which was really cool.

But I was terrified of leaving it because I didn't want to fail. I thought I needed a real job. I didn't have another real job lined up. I thought that that was it. If I didn't stay in a real job then I'm not going to continue to have a real job and all of these but I ended up leaving. I worked as a nanny, I worked as a barista, I worked at a record store, I gigged around as they say and when I ended up at Gloria Steinhem's office, that job itself was a part time job.

So I had to have another job on top of that job, which was part of the design. It wasn't like I wasn't being paid enough but the woman at Gloria's office who's the mentor to all of the staff members, she works for Gloria, she writes some books, she does freelance projects, she did something for Vice recently, she also gigs around also and she's in her 40's and I remember her at Gloria's office and I called her one day and I was just like, "Hey, you know, I'm not sure how much longer this is going to go because I feel like maybe I need to get a real job, I don't know?"

And she was just like, "What do you think I do? What do you think my job is?" and at that moment it all clicked for me. I was like, "Oh, you can have a business, you can have a freelance career, you can also bake, you can do whatever. You can put your life together in whatever shape you want and beating yourself up about not having a real job and at first, this is all bolstered by Facebook and the internet so I can see all my classmates getting promotions and 401(k)'s and all of that.

But you know if I had realized at the beginning that going to college wasn't necessarily — the end game, it wasn't necessarily a nine to five, 40 hours a week and that's how you define success. If I had known at the beginning that there are other ways to define success, I think I would have probably a lot happier and spent a lot less time guilt tripping myself over it. So yeah, nine to fives are awesome, some people love them, some people really thrive in them but also you don't have to.

[0:36:31.3] CS: Yeah.

[0:36:31.9] RP: I love that, so good.

[0:36:33.1] CS: Yeah, where can people find you, Carly, if they want to learn more about your manifesto or what you're doing, Catalyst?

[0:36:39.8] CR: Yeah, so my website is carlyromeoandco.com and if you go to the bio, you'll see a link to the essay I wrote about being a feminist wedding photographer and then Catalyst, which is the magazine/blog all about feminist weddings in the bigger picture not just the ones that I am able to work, catalystwedco.com and I also do a project called Feminist Camp, which is a weeklong conference for college age feminist in New York and Seattle and the website for that is feministcamp.com.

It's a project that Amy, the person I was just talking about at Gloria's office, she started about 10 years ago and now I help her run it and we basically take young feminists from all around the country, sometimes around the world and we bring them in together and show the works. So including feminist wedding photography but other things also.

[0:37:37.9] CS: Thank you so much, Carly. It's been great to learn about all of your interesting background and how you got to where you are and I hope it's been encouraging for those of you out there that are looking to build your unique value in this world and find your niche and go build your creative empire. Thank you all.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:37:57.0] 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]