

EPISODE 118

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:04.1] ANNOUNCER: Welcome to the Creative Empire Podcast. Each week, Reina Pomeroy, the life and biz success coach, and Christina Scalera, the attorney for creatives, are taking you up close and personal with successful influencers in the creative community and tackling your biggest business hurdles. Their mission is to help you, creative entrepreneurs, think beyond your daily biz so you can make the brave decisions that build your Creative Empire.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:35.4] CS: Welcome back for another episode of the creative empire podcast, Reina and I are here today with Lauren Carnes with an E, you may have heard us talk about a different Lauren Carnes before and I'm really excited because Lauren's a good friend. I actually have her dog, we can talk about that in a while but I love her to pieces and I'm so excited to have her on here today because she has recently undergone a transition from being a wedding photographer to doing just the most amazing food photography you've ever seen.

And, on top of all that, she's been doing a lot of the communications that you see when you get Rising Tide Society emails, Instagram stories, Post, she is the gal behind all of that, really excited to have you here today Lauren, welcome.

[0:01:22.2] LC: Thank you so much for having me, I'm really excited.

[0:01:25.8] CS: Can you tell us a little bit about your journey because it definitely isn't the most linear but it all fits in pretty well together.

[0:01:32.9] LC: Yeah, that is such a great question. To give you a little bit of an idea, my background is actually in marketing and public relations and social media. When I was in college, I was a public relations and Spanish major with a certificate if you will in personal and organizational leadership.

It seemed kind of like a logical progression for me to go ahead and work actually in agency life. For about six years total, I worked in marketing and PR, in agency world and also just for some corporate clients where I have the opportunity to really dig deep into people's brands and to figure out what it is that their story is actually telling and how to communicate that with their ideal target audience.

When it first began that way, I was working with some amazing brands, some international brands, clients like Nike and Air Stream and the John Maxwell Company and Chic Fil A and it was a huge honor to be able to serve alongside these incredible communicators and people with brands that are really well recognized. I very quickly got to learn about what it looks like to take a huge brand and make it really local and emphasize on what it is that their story is that they're trying to tell.

That's where I began really and from there, I started exploring this idea of what does it look like to incorporate visual storytelling into that. I have always been the girl with the camera, as a child, would carry around my camera to parties and get together with the ones snapping photos in the corner and I thought, wouldn't it be fun if I could explore what it looks like to be a photographer as well.

At that same time, I was super fortunate that friends of mine were getting married and trusted me to actually shoot their weddings. I started with just doing people's engagement photos for free, I wanted a way to be able to serve people really well in a season that can feel kind of stressful and build a lot of anxiety and I also thought it would be really fun to be able to see that side of their story.

Some of these people I had known one side of the couple and not the other and so it was really fun to get to actually capture their life in that particular season and serve them really well. I started realizing that it wasn't just for fun, it actually was an opportunity for a career. I made a bit of a transition and my husband is a medical resident, he is training to be a urologist and we decided that we would be moving for residency to a guest in Georgia which is where we currently lived.

I figured, now is as good as a time as ever, why not start a business right? Moving to a new city, quit your job, start a new business, you know no one, why would I think that that would be logical, not really sure but I am fortunate in that it magically worked out right.

Of course I say that magically kind of joking because there's a whole lot more work that goes into it than just launching a business, we all know that, we've seen it before, where we think someone just comes out of the woodwork and it's magical and amazing and they have this incredible brand that you wonder how they did it so quickly.

A lot of it comes from that work that was put in on the back end. When I finally was able to launch my photography business, I had moved to a new city, started shooting weddings and at the time, I really didn't have any many clients. Like I said, I didn't know a ton of people at that point, I was really just shooting friend's weddings and as many people know in the wedding industry, a lot of it comes from referrals. Those referrals haven't quite started coming in yet because I hadn't had the work.

I decided that I was going to find any way that I could to show that I was a photographer and at that point in time, I took all of my communication strategy and my social media and public relations background and decided I was going to use myself as a client for the first time ever.

I transformed my social media strategy and if you've ever seen the back end or if you want to just scroll all the way down, you can see there's a whole lot of Valencia filter, you know, Nashville thrown in there, it is a struggle but I started exploring through photography and that's where I really I kind of discovered my passion for food and branding photography and being able to tell those stories in a really unique way.

Kind of keep going down that path, here I am shooting a lot of images, on weddings and on restaurant shots and editorial shoots and commercial branding and started having people ask, you are really a good at crafting the message and coming up with the copy behind what these images stand for and really creating a consistent brand from copy to visuals to imagery.

How are you doing that? It makes me laugh a little bit, it's that same way, it's the magic, oh my gosh, all of a sudden, someone has this perfectly presentable brand but really it was six years

prior of marketing and public relations and communications that I've been doing, being applied to my current brand.

I was super fortunate that at that same time, I started having friends asking me, can you help me with this? Can you coach me on this? Can you do this for me? And started just being able to kind of leave that in really naturally into a brand that I had already created and being able to build consistency for people in their communication strategy.

In that same way I do that now for Rising Tide Society, I was a leader and still am for the Gusto Georgia chapter and became just a part of the team honestly because I was available when they needed me most and I stepped up to the plate.

I think that's something that so often we don't give our self permission to do, when we see a need, we need to fill it. And if we see friends and others who we know that we have a skill set and maybe it's a hidden skill set, maybe it's not something that you're promoting to the public that you actually have but if you see a need, being able to step up to the plate and fill it can actually be one of the most rewarding things, not just for you but also for your clients.

That is what I did with Rising Tide Society and since August of last year, I've been serving as part of their team with Rising Tide and Honey Book and I have the opportunity just to help kind of crash communications and be really strategic about how we build out the RTS and Honey Book brands alongside other clients like Natalie Frank and just other people who are doing really amazing things in the creative food and text basis primarily, it's a lot of fun.

[0:07:28.7] RP: Yeah, you are such a great example of somebody with many skills and you're somehow making them all work. I think what's really cool is that you didn't just like try to do all of those things at once. If you're listening to this and you're like, I can do three different things and I'm really good at all of them, that's what Lauren's doing right now.

She didn't start there right? She started at a place of I'm going to get better at this photography thing, that got off the ground and then I'm going to try this with food photography thing and then it organically morphed into this communication thing because she already had that background.

I just want people to hear that yes, while you can do different things and have unique diverse streams of income but it doesn't happen overnight. Just a little key take away that I'm hearing from you Lauren and I just love how you have really shifted the focus from your photography, obviously you're still doing that but you're tapering it down to concentrate more effort and hold more time into the other part of the business right?

Tell us what that transition has been like and what is the state of the union now?

[0:08:37.2] LC: Absolutely, that is such a great question. Yeah, Reina, you're so right, it doesn't just happen overnight and there has been like Christina said, a long and winding road to get here and the way I see it is it's going to keep being that way, the great thing about being small business owners and being creatives is that we are able to recreate ourselves whenever we want.

We are able to kind of make that transition and so if you're listening and you're thinking gosh, I feel like I'm on the crust of something, I feel like there's a transition in my future. Know that it is possible to do that and I firmly believe that with a lot of thought and preparation and bringing on a proper team that you are able to actually create a really smooth transition.

For me, when I started realizing that in the future, I wanted to be able to incorporate these different elements into my business and I want it to be able to serve multiple different clients, I started thinking of, what was the best way for me to be able to showcase that and kind of talk about it.

With my marketing gears turning, I started realizing that where people are hiring me from, often is via social media, yes they're directed to my website and they will go and see the type of work that I can do which primarily showcases photography work.

When I mentioned about the fact that if it's not something you're technically advertising that you do that you have a skill set, that you would like to fulfill, there is not currently tons of indication that I am a communication strategist on my website which is actually something unique.

Because this work has become really organically and so if something when people are kind of thinking through this transition and how we got to where we are, a lot of it comes from the fact of knowing your skill sets and being able to say yes I'm good at this and yes I will do this and no, I will not do XYZ and feeling really confident when someone asks you for something, if it's not in your wheelhouse.

Being okay to say no and kind of living and breathing in what your differentiating factor is and what it is about you in particular that can actually help people create a product or a brand or a service that they really enjoy.

For me, the transition looked a little bit like realizing that there was something else for me that I wanted to incorporate, knowing that my husband has about two years left in residency so at that point there's a fairly good chance we will be moving again which means that a budding photography business which can also, yes, I serve clients from South Carolina to Georgia all over the southeast but it is also very centric to where you live.

Realizing that I would be moving and I needed to go ahead and start kind of making that transition, I started thinking, if people are finding me on social media then my opportunity is to showcase what it is I have to offer on social media.

One place in particular that I really love doing that is Instagram and I know so many of you are probably thinking, my gosh, yes, Instagram, we know it needs to be a part of our brand, it needs to be a part of our content strategy but I started using it as a place to show who I am, the work that I do and why I do it.

It allowed the transition to be really seamless because when I started moving into more of the communications realm, it seemed like a natural fit because people know that I love to write, they know that I love to encourage people and educate people and serve people through this kind of content that I've created and also that I'm really passionate about building a brand voice that tells your story.

It seemed like a natural progression. In addition to that on Instagram, you'll see me share a lot about my personal hobbies if you will, I am a huge foodie, I love to eat it, cook it, look at it, talk about it, whatever it is about food, I'm a part.

It seems like a natural progression when I am pairing down on as many weddings but moving more into food photography. For people who follow along on kind of this life that I live and this brand that I've created, it is really easy for them to see where all of a sudden now there is actually a different element of my business which has led to that really organic traffic that has come in the new realms of what I'm offering and serving to my clients.

[0:12:29.9] CS: I just always wonder how you do it. You're so active on Instagram, right? You're doing all this other stuff and so you know, like practically speaking, I very selfishly want to know, are you scheduling this or are you just kind of like randomly genuinely from the heart posting whenever something comes to mind and then secretly, how is Chip handling it right?

Because I think that's my biggest impediment is Joe's like my god, you're on your phone again. You know, it's just funny because I feel like we have to be on some chastity but in some ways I'm really resistant. Do you have that resistance or is that just not even a factor for you at this time because you're excited?

[0:13:13.2] LC: I am definitely excited, I love Instagram, there's no doubt about it but there also is a little bit of the element of recognizing that it can be a blessing and a curse right? We need to have those boundaries, we need to set the boundaries for ourselves knowing like I said, what you will do and what you won't do and the same range, what you will share and what you won't share.

Being really intentional about defining your brand voice ahead of time, to finding your tone, knowing what it is that you're going to talk about actually makes it a lot easier in the moments when you're thinking, my gosh, do I really have to post another Instagram?

For me, what I do is I actually use Planoly to give all of my content scheduled out to the actual feed but in addition to that first stories, a lot of that is just off the cuff but it is all surrounding what

kind of my, my inherent editorial strategy is for content creation, for copywriting, for making consistent images with the type of copy and text and captions that I share.

Those Instagram stories are very much just kind of a depiction of what it is that I do and what's going on in my day and kind of brings people into behind the scenes of what's happening which like you said Christina can be a little tricky when you have other people in your life who you really care about and want to serve them well as well.

For me, recognizing that Chip doesn't always want to be on Instagram stories or have billions of photos posted up in social media but he also recognizes that part of my brand is this personal element, it's this element of that I have a husband that I love and a yellow lab who is about the cutest thing in the world and that we live in Augusta and we love to cook together and we love to travel together and these are elements of our life that he knows he's a part of.

I have learned to be really intentional about thinking through what it is that I know I'm going to share in the near future or elements of our life that I would love to incorporate it to this content strategy and if he is involved in it, just kind of letting him know, giving him a little heads up, say for example, if we are going to be traveling. We recently ran London.

I knew that there would be sometimes when I would want him to be in this stories with me because of the fact that it is very much about being able to showcase this life that I live in all elements and it's not just about art actual work that we do.

I let him know ahead of time that hey, there's a chance that I'm going to need you to be in this story, is that okay? Of course he says yes but just preparing and knowing and always kind of being able to think and curation of a content strategy always keeping your mind open for that, that's really my goal is that in every single day and every single element of what I do that I kind of keep a content focused strategy in my brain.

I always know, hey, this could actually be something really valuable to share with my audience. It might actually bring them in to kind of tell that story a little bit deeper or give a little bit of element of entertainment, inspiration, education, kind of showcasing all of those different things but making sure that it always aligns with whatever your brand in particular wants to talk about.

[0:16:05.5] CS: I love that.

[0:16:06.7] RP: I think that is so fun, yeah, I love that too. I think it's hard for people who may be, I don't know, can't think of their stuff in terms of content or they're like, how does my meal make sense for my brand that doesn't make sense or my dilemma is do I put makeup on today to beat my own Insta story. Most of the time, I do not but like, I feel like, what is on brand and what is not on brand is like such a weird thing right? Right now, this real, in real time sort of culture is, I feel like it's shifting what branding really is.

I think the authenticity could be like you know, if that's part of your brand, that's an extension right? I'd love to hear you talk about what are some of the biggest tips you can give like one, two, three, here are the things that we can start thinking about when we're either thinking branding or messaging around the content that we're supposed to be sharing.

[0:17:02.4] LC: Absolutely, yeah Reina, you know, it's so interesting, people ask me that kind of concept a lot, what is on brand, what am I allowed to share, what am I not allowed to share, is this too much? Is this not enough?

It reminds me of one of my favorite quotes actually by an author that I love, if you know Shauna Niequist, it's from her book cold hand dreams. I'm just going to actually read it for you guys because I think this is a great example of kind of starting to think of that one, two, three, what it is that I'm going to talk about. It says, your life right now, today is exploding with energy and power and detail and dimension, better than the best movie you have ever seen.

You and your family and your friends in your house at your dinner table and your garage, have all the makings of a life of epic proportions, a story for the ages because they all are every life is. That right there is a great example to me of each of us has a really unique element to our life, to our story, to the work that we're doing in the business that we lead that can allow us to create content, that feels on brand even if it is personal.

You're so right Reina when you say that it's kind of shifting, this concept of what is considered on brand, what is considered professional. I think it's something that so often we try and be so

professional that we don't let people in to the lives that we live in general but as creatives, often times people are hiring us for who we are as people.

Not just for our work. Three ways that I always encourage people to kind of start thinking about what can I share? One is, what is that brand voice for you? What is your tone, do you use emoji's, are you in person going to be more energetic or are you going to be a little bit more reserved, how does that play into the type of content that you share in your copy and in your captions and then also, how does that planned to kind of the images that you share?

That's the first one, the next one is going to be about the images, it's going to be about, where your image is going to be dark and moody or are they bright and light and airy. Are you more of a welcoming and joyful and excitable person and therefore it might translate well to having images that kind of show a little bit of the quirky every day sort of things or are you a little bit more introspective and thinking a little bit more about kind of the ins and outs of everything to where you might want to show a little bit of more imagery that is kind of reflective that's going to maybe be a little bit darker and moodier.

Thinking of what that tone of voice is going to be will help align with what imagery you share on your, such as your Instagram strategy or a newsletter, copy email strategy sort of thing. Then finally number three is really just being open to what your followers and what the people in your target audience are looking for and finding where they are.

In what you're sharing, you want to know that one, you're sharing what your people want but also then to turn to you and then finally that you're sharing it exactly where they are, because the idea of an ideal client is incredible right?

It's like yeah, that's amazing to think of, there's this one particular person but there actually isn't probably one person who has every single representation of your ideal client.

I do that in quotes if you guys could see. However, there is something that's a general concept of kind of who is your target audience and where are they living, eating, breathing, consuming content? How are they finding you and how are they engaging with the type of things that you have to share?

Being on brand is very much about making sure that where you are sharing and the type of audience potentially if you are on a podcast or if you are potentially guest blogging that their audience also aligns with your brand.

If you never share anything personal then you might want to find something that's a little bit more business centric to do a little bit of outreach and share. If you are very personal and really kind of genuine and authentic to the very inner workings of your brain and your mind and the work that you do.

Then you might find somewhere that's a little bit more heartfelt. There are opportunities for all of those things and places to kind of showcase your work, showcase the type of things that you do in all of those realms but ensuring that if you know your target audience and if you don't I highly encourage, I actually can share with you guys there is a signature brand voice that helps you walk a little bit who your target audience is that I have. It is a PDF guide that I am happy, I'm sure Reina and Christina can share with you all but figuring that out first and then actually just making a list of where all of those people are consuming content.

How they're finding you and then figuring out what is on brand for your on those realms and start to look and see do I feel like what I have to share fits in with this and if not, do I want to change my personal brand strategy or do I feel like what I'm doing really aligns well with who I am. My goal is always that what I am sharing is really going to sound like how I talk. So do you follow me on stories, it's going to be similar to the way that I actually write captions.

If you meet me in person when I'm speaking at events, you will find that this kind of conversation is very similar to how I talk in that realm. If you read my newsletter, you'll often find that I literally have taken my phone and voice messaged myself what I'm going to say in my newsletter when I am out and about keeping that content strategy in my brain. I will write myself notes by talking to myself for them. So ensures that when you need me, it's not going to be surprise.

I'm probably going to sound pretty similarly what you've engaged with me prior and for someone who is a communication strategist and for someone who really values the opportunity to align

imagery with copy, I think that's incredibly important. That is not a surprise that there is consistency and there is that trust factor. That's my ultimate goal in all of the content that I create and I think it should be for anyone else as well.

[BREAK]

[0:22:42.6] 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 have actually 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]

[0:23:26.6] RP: Yeah, I was going to say I think it's high praise when somebody comes up to you in a real life event and says, "Hey you're exactly what I imagined you would be like" I guess that is the manifestation of good branding right? That you reflect what is online and what people are seeing.

[0:23:44.1] LC: Right and that's my goal and the thing is that doesn't have to be your goal. If you are a very bubbly person and are willing to share a lot in person but don't necessarily want your 20,000 followers on Instagram to know the ins and outs of your life, that is absolutely okay but finding a way for those two things to align I think is incredibly important or else there is going to be that surprise and ultimately, people want to be able to align well with what you have to offer.

And say, "Hey I feel especially as a creative I feel like I could be friends with them and not just as a transaction of money" because who wants that? No one just wants to be, "Here pay me. I'll offer this service and then we'll call it quits" people want to build relationships and in this day and age especially with things like The Rising Tide Society and the Heart Centered Biz Bosses

Group and things like this podcast, people want to feel as though they can be a part of something.

They want a role, they want to be advocates for a brand and therefore they want to come alongside you. So finding a way to bring them alongside you in your journey I think is very important.

[0:24:41.8] RP: Ooh, I want to highlight that. So people want to feel they are a part of something and so how can you do that in your brand? No matter if you're doing Instagram stories or not, how can you bring people to take them along on your journey and as intimately or not as you want in that process? So I just want to highlight that, I think that is really clever and I am going to start thinking about how I'm going to do that more.

So let's shift, pivot, switch a little bit so you were a part of Hailey and I's selling the generosity series and you talked about a topic that I think a lot of people resonated with. So tell us a little bit about that and yeah, just having to create a pitch is really nerve racking for people so tell us how to succeed.

[0:25:25.9] LC: It is, yes. So I mentioned earlier that my background is in traditional public relations. For those of you who don't know this, I think it is the common misconception and it even was for me when I first started. I was a public relations major because I was like, "I like people, I like relating to the public, that sounds fun" when in reality, public relations actually is more like media relations in the traditional sense. It has morphed since then with the digital age and with the realm of social media.

It has morphed a little bit of it brings in different elements of marketing and branding and things like that but public relations in this sense and specifically with what Reina is talking about is actually more along the lines of reaching out to a reporter and calling them or emailing them or letting them know that you have an incredible story to share. So what I shared about for the Selling with Generosity with Reina and Hailey was this idea.

It was the perfect package for an easy yes and so often I think people are intimidated by the first time of reaching out whether it's a cold call which I know many people are very intimidated by

the idea of picking someone on the phone and selling them, pitching them right on the phone or just via email or a long term strategy or all of your marketing and all of your content, all of your copy should always be selling something even if it's not very overt.

So when I was talking about this, the idea that in creating a pitch package when you are reaching out to say potentially your favorite podcast, I don't know maybe Creative Empire, just saying and when you are reaching out, you want to make it really easy for whomever you are reaching out to, to say yes. You want to let them know that you have everything that they need in one little package so that they don't have to do any work right?

That's the goal is you would make the lives of the people that we are serving really easy and so for creating a package for a pitch, you want to be able to essentially have your little intro if you will a template almost. You can templatize these things. I am all about automation, I think it is really important that we make sure that we are doing ourselves service and not just working ourselves to death. So creating some sort of template but also making that template personal.

So giving yourself affection on the template that actually allows you to touch on something specific about the person you're reaching out to has talked about. Maybe it is a previous podcast that they've shared, maybe it is a previous article that they bring about and this is your take on that trend that they are speaking about. Maybe it is even something that you are reaching out to national media and you want to be able to showcase exactly why your particular story is great for their particular publication.

So making sure that you are being really intentional about communicating directly to the person that you are talking to instead of just copy-paste, copy-paste, copy-paste because I don't know about you guys but there is nothing worse to me than getting one of those emails that you're like, "I am 100% positive that this email was literary the same email that they've just sent 200 people".

[0:28:23.5] RP: Yep.

[0:28:24.7] CS: Yeah, we usually see it because the parts that they edited were in a different font or color or size. I'm like, "Okay, I know exactly that you just copied and pasted it on our

podcast name” and somebody did something really interesting the other day which I loved and we’ll probably get on the show. They left us a review, took a screen shot of the review and put it in the pitch that they had and it was a good pitch all over.

I love it because it takes time to do that. It wasn’t just like they copied and pasted our name. They actually took the time to find us, leave a review and let us know about it which means a lot. These reviews we always ask for them but it really does make a difference guys.

[0:29:08.9] LC: And you know what says to me as a public relations practitioner that says that they have taken their time to do the research. Now they have actually listened to your podcast and know what it is that you share. They want to be part of your brand, like I mentioned they want to roll. They want to be advocates. I am a perfect example of that. I have been following along and listening to your podcast ever since it first started and part of that is because I adore the two of you.

But also our friendship has grown overtime since that began and that’s part of how I am here today. It’s just because there has been intentional relationship. I started following and engaging with you guys, Christina adopted the dog that I was fostering, Reina and I had had coffee chats, these relationships don’t just come out of nowhere like I mentioned earlier. Instead, I had been intentionally pursuing relationships with people because I know that one, yes it’s about friendships.

It’s about building community but also this community allows me to recognize that hey, my target audience for example is exactly the type of listener who is going to be a part of this. So that person who took that screenshot and sent over, “Hey I’ve been listening to your podcast” that to me says that they are a part of this audience. They get what you are doing, they’re tracking with you and just like you guys said, it made you feel good and you said, “You know what? They’ll probably be here”.

They’ll probably be joining us because that worked and it wasn’t just copy-paste and then sometimes even not including your name or heaven forbid, not changing the name of the last person that they emailed which is unfortunate when that happens.

[0:30:36.4] RP: Well I get a lot of, “I love your content. I love what you are putting out there” it’s like, okay tell me one article that you’ve read that I put together and it’s not this pessimistic cynical part of me that bursts out but just tell me what it is that you actually like. It doesn’t take very long to do that research and whenever I pitch a podcast, I always say listen to at least two episodes because you’ll never know. You never know what you are trying to get yourself into and it gives you so much context.

So I appreciate that, I mean that’s how we choose all of our mentoring session podcast episode guests. These are people who are listeners so yeah.

[0:31:14.4] LC: People who are engaged and already taking part in the brand and believe in what you’re doing and want to be able to be a part in any way that they can and so yeah, I think that’s a perfect example. Like you said Reina, find a piece of content. Listen to the podcast, if you are wedding professional and you are wanting to share a wedding, make sure that you have actually followed the guidelines. These people have created guidelines for a reason.

So read the guidelines, see what it is that they want you to send over. If they want you to send a specific size image or if they only share real weddings and not styled shoots, that’s something really important to actually cater to their needs so that once again, it’s really easy for them to say yes and they can just move forward quickly and send it along to be able to go through the content creating phase. So one last little thing about creating that pitch package is in that realm of creating a very easy way for them to move forward on content quickly.

If they don’t have to actually create content, to publicize or to showcase whatever it is that you sent over, then you make it easier for them because it eliminates time which therefore is money for them and also just gives them a beautiful product that feels really, once again, on brand for you. So if you have high quality so let’s go with professional images that are low resolution, don’t just take a photo on your iPhone but when you are sharing something, if you have a head shot for example.

Embed that in the email. Don’t attach it because sometimes people have filters to where they don’t allow attachments to come through on their email. So embed it in the email to showcase a little bit of “here are some of the examples of the imagery that we have to offer you” and that

way, they can use it on their promotion, they can use it on graphic that they are trying to share about whatever it is that they have going on.

If they need a header image where the guests blog post, it's all right there and ready to go and you can link to if you have more images for them to get access to, you can link to that so they can go and see more and then finish out that email or that phone call with making that call to action. Make that ask so that they know what the logical next step is. If you are ready to set up an interview and go ahead and let people know that there is someone available to be interviewed, ask them.

“When is a good time for me to set up an interview with this particular person?” and I say that actually because you might think, “Oh I’m going to pitch this all in first person” you’re going to say, “I do this, this is me, this is what I do” but in reality, what you need to be doing is actually pitching in third person. So when you are pitching make sure that it is something that could very easily be that, once again, if they wanted to copy and paste, they could.

They wouldn't have to change out all of those pronouns, they wouldn't have to change all the little details, instead it makes it really simple for them to have it all ready in a perfect little package. Take these images that you've sent over, engage with you, host it and when they post make sure that you follow up. Thank them, this is their job as well. It is mutually beneficial for you guys to engage and to share what they have created and what they have put out there and what they've showcased about your work as well.

So make sure you follow up and once again like I said, keep building that relationship. It really is all about the relationships.

[0:34:14.5] RP: Yeah and not only just follow up with them but also to promote that content right? That's something to be proud of and just keep promoting. I find that a lot of people who have been on other people's podcast, they'll promote an episode or whatever and I think that is a lost opportunity for both parties.

[0:34:34.3] LC: Absolutely and you know, the thing is about any sort of press or a podcast or a guest blog feature or a feature of your images, that actually is a third party endorsement. That is

an opportunity for anyone who feels icky promoting themselves, feels like, “Oh my gosh, I don’t really want to be a braggy social media poster, how do I do that?” if someone else has actually promoted you and has showcased your work and shared something that you have done that says that they believed in what you’re doing, right?

People are only going to showcase your work or invite you on a podcast if they believed in what you are doing and therefore, you have someone already who has been that third party endorsement, who has said, “Yes this is valuable content and you should be able to access it that you should be a part of it” so share it and know that that just kind of alleviates that ick factor for you, right?

[0:35:19.9] CS: For sure and when you’re looking at the future I mean just to shift a little bit, when you are looking at the future creating this content, what are some ways that people can really maximize their ROI if they’re looking to maybe get a little bit more involved with others, to have these really solid relationships, if they are not able to go to all of the conferences or Tuesdays Together is just too far away for them or something, what do you see being maybe the next wave of communications in relationship building?

[0:35:49.3] LC: Absolutely, 100% email marketing. So I know it’s kind of a buzz word right now. People feel a little bit overwhelmed with it I think and chatting with my communications coaching clients and then doing consulting for people, I hear over and over that people feel a little overwhelmed by “what do I do with my newsletter? Do I even have a newsletter? Do I need a newsletter? Why do I need one?” they want to know what it is that they need to do.

So that they can be on the cutting edge, be on the front running part of that and so for me, the logical next step is that say do get a guest blog post. Having some sort of content upgrade at the end. If the person will allow it, will allow that person who has read the blog post or is engaged with the podcast, anything like that to know where to find you next because like I mentioned just in the way that you’re pitching someone to showcase you on a podcast, you actually also need to be thinking about anytime someone is reading something of yours.

Or looking at something of yours it is an opportunity for a pitch as well and you want them to know what the logical next step is. You want that call to action. So giving them potentially a

content upgrade or letting them know where they can find you to engage more is a great way to continue that conversation and to continue building those relationships. I have seen on my little tiny baby newsletter and I am proud of it. I don't even mind that I have a small newsletter following because I will tell you what, they are some of the most engaged following that I have ever seen.

They are incredible, they respond to me, they purchase from me, they are consistently giving me feedback on what it is that they love, what they want to see more of and then I take that and run with it and I actually use it as an opportunity to engage with them on social media. So if I know a particular person engages with me a lot on my email, then maybe I will follow them on social to actually give them a little bit of love back because sometimes people think it is a little awkward.

Like, "Oh do I comment on this person that I don't know? Is it weird, I've never met them but maybe they're a friend here that I dream of or a person that I would love to connect with them one day" engaging with them is one of the best ways to do that because truthfully, everybody loves the like, everybody loves the comment, everybody loves to know that the work that they're doing, the content that they're creating and putting out there is valuable to someone.

I will tell you, I have been brought to tears by people responding to my Instagram stories, by people responding to my newsletter and saying, "This really resonated with me" or "This hit home for me, it's exactly what I needed to hear" or my communication strategy or my photography and the next steps for what I want to do with my brand has completely transformed by watching or listening or reading what you have to offer.

So giving them the next step, letting them know that there is something more you can offer to them and then when they come and engage with you, make sure you are engaging back with them. That's the way to continue that relationship and to make it so it's not just one sided because there is nothing worse than having only one person participate in a conversation. It's not really that fun. Conversations and relationships are two sided so make it that way.

[0:38:42.9] CS: Thanks Lauren.

[0:38:44.0] RP: So true.

[0:38:45.2] CS: As you're looking, you talked a lot about your journey here so I don't want to ask to go back to that but as you are looking ahead, what do you see in your future, in your future creative empire in the next three to five years? Do you see more Instagram, do you see more communications, more food photography? I know that is a hard question for you but we're going to put you on the spot and go ahead and ask you anyway.

[0:39:09.6] LC: Yeah, it's a great question and like I mentioned earlier, as creatives our businesses morph so quickly and we are able to envision what it is that we want and something that I really love is being able to take that 30,000 foot view. So come up really high, take a peek at what's to come, what that road map looks like and then get down on it and get through the nitty-gritty and actually create that road map and follow it.

And so for me, what that looks like is a little bit less of the weddings, a lot more food photography, it looks a lot like being able to come alongside brands and their launch and their transition from one side of their brand to another in helping them to find that brand strategy, to find their communications, create the content, build out their newsletter platform, coming alongside them in that season and then finally, coming alongside brands who really care about their work and what they're doing, and helping them showcase it to the people who care about their work and what they are doing.

So those are the things that I am envisioning on the business side and like I mentioned, business is not just business. Business is personal too. So I envision a super successful finish for my husband's residency program as continuing pursuing whatever is next, that next season of moving into him getting a job and applying for a job for the first time ever which is really exciting and scary and just being able to be a part of a family who really cares that business is life and life is business and we have the opportunity to make those merge really well if we do it intentionally.

So that's what the next three to five years looks like and there are a lot of fun things coming down the pipeline, and I'm in conversation with people about some exciting new projects to come. We have a mastermind retreat that's coming up in September. One of my main goals is to

shoot a cookbook here soon, so those are kind of the things I'm working on and excited about what's to come.

[00:40:59.0] RP: I'm just so inspired by how many things you've got going on and you're managing beautifully and doing a really great job, and I keep hearing your name. I mean, we're friends, obviously. But I hear your name from all over, from people who don't know that we're friends. So I just commend you and I think it's just a testament to keep working hard at the things that are important to you and they will come to fruition.

So for those of you listening and feel like, "Oh, how do I even do this?" You take the next step, that's how you do it.

[00:41:28.0] LC: You do. You just keep doing it. Find a great community, and run alongside them. Run your race, don't look left and right, do your thing, and just keep working hard and find amazing people to do it along side you. It makes it so much more fun.

[00:41:41.0] RP: And with that, go build your creative empire!

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:41:46.0] 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]