

EPISODE 134

[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]

[0:00:36.3] RP: Hi everybody. It's Reina and Christina here. Welcome back to another episode of the Creative Empire Podcast. Today, we have an awesome mentoring session with Amy Cherry who's been doing photography for over 10 years, and she's the girl behind Amy Nicole Photography. We're so excited to talk to Amy about what it's like to move a business from one place to another. This is going to be a really cool mentoring session and hopefully if you're moving or if you know of somebody who's moving, you'll be able to really empathize with this.

Amy, thank you so much for joining us and we're really jazzed to talk to you.

[0:01:10.4] AC: I'm happy to be here. This is exciting.

[0:01:12.9] RP: Give us a little bit of backstory on what's been going on in the photography business.

[0:01:17.2] AC: I've been shooting for about 10 years, but I officially started my business five years ago in Nashville. My husband and I are from Virginia, grew up in Virginia. Decided, "Let's get out," and so we moved to Nashville after graduation. Looking back on it, I'm like, "Oh! He had a job but he didn't know how he's going to get paid." I didn't have a job and we still did it.

I started my own business there, and then in about year four we decided that we wanted to make this dream of a Europe trip pathing and moved back to Virginia afterwards. In year four,

which was a really great year for my business. We decided, "Hey, we're going to move," because of his job situation and our community situation and things like that. We couldn't share it with anyone. I could not kind of get on the frontend of putting many leads out there because it was not known to anyone.

I did spend some time connecting with people at the year prior to our move. When we come back to this family, I would meet people and things like that, but we officially moved one year ago. Packed up our things, went to Europe in 5 weeks and moved to Charlottesville, Virginia. That's where he accepted a job and we've loved every minute of Charlottesville. It's such a cool town.

[0:02:32.0] CS: Yeah, I would too.

[0:02:34.5] AC: Yeah! It's a really cool town. It's so different than when I grew up. Monticello is kind of thing to do growing up, and now it's like the cool wine country and there's just a ton going on here. It's like a little bit of city, a little of bit slow pace small town.

I have restarted my business between year four and five. Not restarted, but kind of. I know the basics and things, the mistakes and not do it again. I am finding a whole new client base.

[0:03:07.2] CS: Okay. To clarify, you moved from where to where?

[0:03:10.7] AC: Nashville to Charlottesville.

[0:03:10.9] CS: Nashville to Charlottesville. Okay. Your old client base was who and your new client base is who?

[0:03:18.3] AC: Yeah. I have shot weddings and families in both areas. My family business, that portion really started to take off in the last year, so I've still traveled back a ton for our family sessions. I think I've been back 8 or 9 times so far in a year, and I will continue to go because I love these families dearly. I'm still shooting weddings in both. To be honest, I rarely have a client who lives where I live, so that's kind of like tackling the same problem, because Charlottesville

and Nashville are both kind of destination areas. Yeah, weddings and families are the main portion of my business.

[0:03:55.1] CS: I guess I didn't get what changed, because you said your whole client base changed. You're talking about the actual clients themselves.

[0:03:59.6] AC: Yes. It's the same business, but all of my contacts, all of my families that we're saying, "Oh, go hire Amy. Go hire Amy," are all in Nashville. Last been has been a lot of meeting new venue managers or event planners or just telling people what I do, and for an introvert, that's a lot of throwing yourself out there, and it's been super fun and people have been so welcoming. It is spending a lot of time just saying, "This is who I am. This is where I live. This is what I do."

[0:04:39.2] CS: How is it working?

[0:04:41.5] AC: It's working well. To say that it's not working would be a lie. It just feels slow. I would say people have been way more welcoming here than I expected, that has been a win. At the same time, I just don't have a pool of people that know who I am because I can — Not that you fall back on your community all the time, but you do have a community saying your name in business. Here, it's taken a year to really even just let people know that I'm here.

[0:05:13.2] RP: Yeah. I was just going to say that you have spent four years really building momentum in Nashville and in the beginning of your business, and I'm guessing that when you started it was probably this slow as well and you're actually probably gaining a lot more momentum more quickly in your business just because you know the business side, the practical, and your skill is probably up at a level where that it's slow, whatever, but I think it's just because you are in a new market, you need to develop some roots where you are and then you'll start seeing a lot more of that return actually quicker than you saw when you were down south.

[0:05:50.8] AC: Yeah. It was just super encouraging to hear. I think it's not always talked about, like people moving their business. Even when I was moving, I would Google, just even blog post about, "Hey, I moved. This is what I did." Some of it was SEO based. Some of it was go meet

people. I'm just very much a doer, and so I just want to do as much as I can so that I can always look back and say, "You gave it your all." That is very encouraging to hear from the outside.

[0:06:19.4] RP: Sorry. Go ahead, Christina.

[0:06:21.4] CS: I was going to say Shelby Steckbauer. We had on her on. I'm trying to pull up her episode number, but she talked about what it was like to move across country, because she started her business in Wisconsin and then moved to Atlanta and talked a lot about what that looked like for her to be.

If you just want to check out Shelby Stechbauer's episode, that's episode number 41. We did it a while ago, but she did move cross country from Wisconsin to Atlanta and she did it very successfully and has built up quite a portfolio in, I think, less than a year and a half. She had a huge business in Atlanta.

[0:06:55.2] RP: Yeah, something too. This isn't necessarily for you, Amy, but other listeners who might be moving. I've talked to a lot of people who are married pastors who need to move to some random place.

[0:07:04.7] CS: Military spouse.

[0:07:05.4] RP: Or military spouses. I just talked to one yesterday who's stationed in Korea and she stayed up till 11 p.m. to talk to me at 10 a.m. Eastern. I was like, "You are committed. Thank you." There are life circumstances that require or allow opportunities for these things. I think we, as creative entrepreneurs, we get to be flexible and we get to be — Yes, it's a challenge, but also we can see it as an opportunity. Just shifting your mindset if you're in a place of, "Ugh! I don't want to do this and I don't want to start over again," kind of thing. We get a challenge and an opportunity to re-shift our business.

What's it been like for you as you started? What's been your mindset around "starting over"?

[0:07:47.1] AC: First, I really felt like, “Okay, this is going to just be the hardest thing ever.” Jeremy, my husband, I’m like, “Oh! He’s going to his job and I’m going to love my job too, but it’s going to look so different with us moving to a new town.”

My mindset has been though that I must get a restart, like a refreshed — I can come at it knowing who I am, what I do and what sets me apart rather than the three or four years of — Let’s be honest, 10 years of figuring out who I am and what I want to do. That’s kind of been my outlook is, “Okay. This is a chance to come in strong as who you are rather than having to take all the time to figure it out.” Let’s be real.

[0:08:34.6] CS: Yeah. Amy, I want to ask you. How many clients do you — If you don’t want to answer this exactly. Do you know how many clients that you need for the rest of this year for family and portrait sessions and weddings? If that’s kind of late to book weddings for the rest of this year, but do you know how many weddings you need in 2018? What does that look like for you, or do you at least — If you don’t want to share the numbers, do you have a clear picture of what that is for you?

[0:08:59.4] AC: Yeah. I do have a clear picture. This might be odd, but I have a better picture of the income I need to meet our income needs per month and my gross versus expenses and things like that.

[0:09:13.1] CS: So far I’ve heard, it seems like things are going pretty well. You’re making the transition. You’ve made the move. You have a really good understanding of your numbers from what you’ve told us, which is fantastic. Even if you’re not a number’s person out there, it’s important to look at that stuff. What is it that you feel — Because I still see this kind of hesitancy in you. What’s holding you back? Where do you feel like you’re really struggling, because that’s how we’re going to get to the meat of this mentoring session today and just kind of talk about what’s going on.

[0:09:44.6] AC: Yeah. I would say this oddly enough pricing has been a huge thing for me, and I hate to say that because that’s such like an answer that photographers talk about so much even though I know my numbers, but it’s a lot of, “Hey —” I get an inquiry and then I send my pricing

and it's too high or it's too this. We all know that it's not just pricing. I'm still working a lot on amping up my marketing and really putting out what sets me apart.

I think the hardest part has been seeing my numbers for a year, one through four. Seeing my numbers for this year, and I'll share this because in October it will be public, but we are welcoming a little one in January. That makes me — I'm so, so thrilled, and I've already got a plan for like, "This is when I'll do maternity leave and this is how many sessions and weddings I need."

I know what I need and it's not hard not always meeting those numbers. I know what is enough, and what is enough for us is actually not that big. When you look at constant no's and rejections, it can be hard to feel like, "Is the momentum going to pick up to where we're going to be able to continue making what I need?" Because I do plan on going back to Nashville quarterly, but I can't go back nine times a year for the rest of forever.

[SPONSOR BREAK]

[0:11:12.2] CS: Have you heard about Member Vault? It's a new course delivery platform for online educators that focuses on one thing; engagement. "But what the heck is engagement," you might be asking me, "and why does it even matter?"

Have you ever purchased an online course and um, yeah, maybe forgot to finish it? My hand is raised. This has happened to me definitely more than a few times, and guess what? I never purchased from these course creators again, like anything. The courses that I have finished, well, let's just say I'm more than a lifelong fan. I've joined their masterminds, I've bought their coaching programs. I generally tried to support them as much as I can all along the way.

If you are looking to fall into the later camp and you want to create raving fans for your platform, make sure that you go to creativeempire.co/membervault. That's creativeempire.co/M-E-M-B-E-R-V-A-U-L-T to get your free 30-day trial of this software. Not only will you get 30 days free, which should be more than enough time to get up maybe even a mini course for you, you'll also receive free access to the course that's going to show you how to do this.

This course is called the DIY Roadmap and the folks over at Member Vault have set this up just for you. It's normally a \$97 course that they're giving away for our listeners for free, and all you have to do to get it is go over to creativeempire.co/membervault. This course is going to help you build your own online teaching platform that boosts your income and sells itself without you even having to go through a launch.

Again, normally that's a \$97 course that they sell on its own, but they're giving it away to you guys for free along with a 30-day trial. Creativeempire.co/membervault is going to get you all those goodies. Go get them today.

[HOST MESSAGE]

[0:13:17.2] CS: I know we sounds like a broken record, but it really doesn't make a difference if you guys leave us a rating and a review in iTunes, preferably both, but if you only have time for one then just go ahead, leave us a rating. It takes literally less than 30 seconds total to find us. Click that 5-star button, hopefully. Be honest, but hopefully 5 stars and leave us that rating and hopefully even a review.

The reason why it's so important is because these ratings and reviews help us to show up higher in the search results and that means that our download numbers go up. When our download numbers go up, we get to have a lot more flexibility with the guest that we bring on the show. We get to bring on guests that are doing really cool stuff that give you things for free. Make sure that you do leave us a rating and a review.

This week's rating and review comes from Lyn [inaudible 0:14:06.0]. I'm not sure. Anyway, Lyn says, "I absolutely love this podcast. They have the most amazing, relevant, insightful and inspiring guests and topics. I'm so glad there are so many episodes because I binge listen to the episodes every chance I get. The tone of the show is so pleasant to listen to, but also super informative and educational. I can't wait for more episodes."

Thank you so much, Lyn. It means a lot to us that you took the time out of your day to leave us that rating and that review. If you guys would like us to read your review on air, please do leave your name and go leave us that review in iTunes.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:14:41.1] RP: One thing I wanted to say is commend you for the fact that you are a legit enough business owner to have looked at your numbers, know what enough looks like and to be able to build out a revenue plan for yourself especially during this transition time both of moving and of going on maternity leave. Those are huge changes in our lives, like huge, and enough that people might close shop if it weren't for the numbers, or whatever. I really want to commend you for having looked at those.

Also, the second part is, is that sometimes we need permission to not look at what is — What is the actual answer might not be pricing. It might be just the fact that you're starting over and it's hard to say that you're starting over, or it's hard to — I don't know. Maybe the answer isn't your pricing, and it might just be finding better ways of finding the referrals that you used to get, which it sounds like it was the original way that you typically get most of your clients. You don't have that referral base right now, so the momentum feels a little bit slow. Maybe instead of thinking about all the nos that you're getting and think about how can we get more yeses from the right people?

[0:15:52.2] AC: Yeah. Totally.

[0:15:53.4] CS: Yeah. When I hear "pricing" I hear "UVP". I'm like, anybody that follows me is so sick of hearing about UVP, which just means unique value proposition, but it's true. You have to find that niche and when you think you found it, you have to go 10 layers deep, deeper than that.

It's not enough anymore to be a wedding and family photographer. It might be enough to be a family photographer in Charlottesville, in the surrounding area. You're in huge worst country, it might be enough to be an e-client photographer. It might be enough to be a family photographer who incorporates pets into every session. That's the kind of thing that people will remember you for and be able to refer you. Otherwise, "Oh, I know Amy. I know Sally. I know Judy." I don't know why, like Sally and Judy are really old names. I don't know why. Just that — Sorry if you're Judy and Sally out there.

What I'm saying is if you are not — If you're just a normal family photographer out there, those people that you're looking for referrals from, they're not going to know when to refer you, and that's the value of having a really solid UVP. The other part of that is you're the only one they know at that point. When somebody says, "Oh man! I really want to get these photos with my pet. My pet is aging. I don't have any pictures of me and my pet," or whatever, "my pet and I forever," but once they hear that you're like that, and I'm not saying that should be your niche. I'm just saying once you find whatever niche it is, whether it's like premie newborns or pregnant moms. I don't know. It could be any of these things.

Once that you work with that pregnant mom, if that were to be your niche, she's got all of her little pregnant mama friends, she goes to her prenatal yoga class, whatever it is. She's going to know you as the prenatal photographer, versus I shoot families and she doesn't know, does that mean you shoot teenagers. Does that mean you shoot Christmas cards? Does that mean you shoot semi-office photos with like very corporaty type people and their kids? Does that mean you shoot the professors at Charlottesville with their family? What does it mean?

Choosing one of those demographics and going after that, and it doesn't have to be the right one. I think most people are scared because they're like, "Oh! What if I don't like it?" Well, then you just change. You rebrand. You say, "I'm no longer a prenatal photographer. I only shoot professors at UVA and their families." That can be your niche.

You can kind of reinvent yourself, but just choosing that one path gives you a really clear idea of who's out there for you and then they know who to refer so that they're not just naming list of five photographers.

[0:18:26.8] CS: Yeah. Another way to look at your UVP too is in a way that you provide your service. Instead of looking at the niche that you kind of go into, that's one way of looking at it. Another way is to have a signature process, or a very signature offer, very much like when we talked to Lauren of Elle & Company Design. She had a two-week design process. She's a graphic designer. She does web design, but the way that she packaged it in her process was the thing that made her special. It wasn't necessarily the type of people that she was targeting, but the kind of offer she created.

Thinking about that, and that might be the thing to start the momentum back up or just creating a different kind of experience than what's "expected" and knowing that that's what the people that you're targeting actually might need.

[0:19:18.0] CS: Yeah, we're interviewing Mary Marantz and Justin later, and I feel like most people knew who they are. One of the things that they talk about a lot, and they blog about it, is their silver frame. I'm sure they do a lot more than that, but that's just one thing that really sets them apart and created a client experience.

My hesitancy when I'm doing something like that is I'm like, "Oh, we also are doing that." That's just kind of expected, but it's not actually not. If you kind of remove yourself from this rising tide community, creative world, savvy business owners. That kind of circle of people, it's really shocking how many people are not doing the things that we're assuming that they do. Reina has a really good point.

[0:20:00.2] AC: Yeah. I don't know if you guys have heard of Don Miller and his StoryBrand podcast. That's one of the ones I'm obsessed with, and he just came out with if you bought his book ahead of time, they send you a paper copy, and so I'm going through that now to really dig in to telling a story to my client because I feel like, like you guys said, it's finding those things. I've always known what I do is unique.

Ever since I started my business, you get an heirloom box or some sort of heirloom, and then in digital world I know that I'm fighting upstream, but it is something that I've done, but I've always just kind of said, "Oh! Here's the heirloom box," or "here's this," and finding a way to like, like you both have said, is really take it super deep and figure out what is different about it. Yeah, I'm kind of going off track, but it's just — Yeah. You might want to edit that part out.

[0:20:57.0] CS: Yeah. What do you feel like you could incorporate that would be different? Maybe something that you've been craving, but you just haven't felt like you had time or there hasn't been a need, now there is. What is it? For example, for me, it was my client magazine. I desperately need to have a client magazine because I get the same questions over and over

and over from my clients and I want to be able to answer that in a way that is familiar to them and not scary. That's one of the things that I'm working on right now.

[0:21:26.4] AC: Yeah. Goodness! I feel like that's such a long question of, "Oh! I could do this, and this, and that." There's more than one thing. I really think part of it is nailing the confidence in it and figuring out not just my one liner, but like something that I can really boil down so that when I do meet new people or my clients are talking about or referring, they know what I'm about and what sets me apart easily.

I think it's just been this kind of nebulous idea for the last four years of my business and things that I talked about, but it's not like a solid focus, and so I think especially in a move, realizing, "Oh, no. Solid focus is like what I need most right now, because it's one of the few things that I'll have fighting for me when I am —"

[0:22:16.6] CS: Okay. What is that, or you don't know and trying to find that focus?

[0:22:16.6] AC: I'm working on it. It's such a bigger idea that I can't boil it down easily, and I think that's been a huge thing for me these last few years, especially this last year is I can talk to you in a conversation about what's different, but if you've got five seconds on a website to make my first impression, I've not been able to nail it down in that way.

[0:22:45.5] RP: I totally feel you. Me trying to describe what I was doing as a coach at the beginning was like exactly that struggle. If I had Don Miller from the beginning, I would be like golden. I totally hear that it's so hard to show inwards how you're different, and I get that.

One thing I wanted to commend you on and just acknowledge is that you have so much experience already, and I think it might feel like a super nebulous thing, and it is, but I think a lot of it is setting the intention to do this work that a lot of people don't do. As a coach, I want to hammer home. From the beginning, it's really important for you to know this core stuff about your business and you already have the evidence and the data to kind of congeals that icky work, but just put it all together so that it's in one place, whatever it is that you believe. Whatever it is that you want to deliver to kind of package it up for yourself so that you can put it out into words in a more — I don't know, effective way, I guess? Yeah, it's not just like a one sit down

and I got it down kind of a process, but more — It's like you sit down, do it, write it down, maybe put it away for a little bit.

I don't know if you have any exercises that you're trying or how you're spending time kind of trying to articulate some of these things.

[0:24:01.0] AC: Yeah. I could tell you I have so many notes on my phone. They're like voice memos because it always comes to me when I'm driving or things like that, or it comes to me when I'm about to fall asleep and I'm like, "Really? Right now?"

Right now, I'd say the most solid work I'm doing is going through that book by Don Miller because he breaks it down into steps of, "Here's your client." "Who is your client?" "What's the story you're telling?" I don't know. I guess in the many years, it's been the most practical way for me to really sit down and do the work, because it's such a step-by-step rather than, "Who is your client and your ideal, and this, and where do they shop?" Those haven't always worked for me, and so I think this last year moving a business and then having to be like, "Okay. No. Really, you need to sit down and you need to figure this out," has been so hard, but I would say that that book and that step-by-step process has been the, I guess, most — Yeah, the most work I've been doing recently.

[0:25:01.3] RP: Yeah, and keep it up too. I think that it's hard to do that work sometimes, because it feels like it's not revenue generating, or it doesn't really push you forward in our expectations or whatever. I think it is so central to the way that we offer our services. It's so central to the way that we show up in the world, in the creative world.

Another thing I wanted to point out is that I love Don Miller, because he talks about the hero and the guide and how — If you don't know what I'm talking about, go listen to his podcast, but you are not the hero of this story. As a service provider of a creative product, you are not the hero. You are the Dumbledore to the Harry Potter. That's something that I keep coming back to over and over again whenever we're writing copy of our website. It's not about us. It's not about us and how we want to feel and how we want to show up in the world. It's about our clients and how we serve them and how we make them feel.

[0:25:53.9] CS: I have one last question, Amy. Is there a client that you have no in Charlottesville or near Charlottesville that you love? Like dream client?

[0:26:03.9] AC: I do. Yeah.

[0:26:05.8] CS: Can you talk to them? Can you take her/him to lunch and get those words from them?

[0:26:12.0] AC: Yeah. Funny, it has kind of developed this relationship in the last couple of months, but I've worked with her twice already since I've been here, and we have plans to work together again in the next few months. I've been trying to interview past clients, but my goal — Yeah, it's just so funny that you had asked that, because I know exactly who she is in my mind and interviewing and getting to talk to someone real puts so much more of a face to your business and you know who you're talking to.

Yeah, it took a while to get there, but now I can finally say I at least got one that, "Okay. Yeah. She's my girl. She's my —"

[0:26:47.6] CS: That's huge. Yeah, treat her so well. Get all the information from her. Be best friends with her. Put her photo on your website. Ask her for her friends to refer you, or for her to refer you to her friends. Yeah, I think more than anything, you hit the nail on the head as you're developing your story and your brand.

I'm not super familiar with Don Miller. I've listened to his show a few times. He sounds like Joseph Campbell lite. I think if you can follow her and see what it is about her that's different. Maybe there's something, a way she treated you or something she wanted in her photos. There's something there that's deeper that maybe you just haven't had intentional time, since this is coming to you as you're falling as sleep and in the car, which I totally understand. But it might just take like setting aside an afternoon, like a Friday afternoon if you can, or a Monday — Whatever is your least busy period to just kind of simmer and journal.

I would really encourage you to do it pen to paper despite the fact that phones, iPads, things like that are easier. There's just something really magical about that sometimes.

[0:27:52.9] CS: I totally agree.

[0:27:56.2] RP: I was just going to say to kind of close this loop as well, is that I feel like maybe my intuition is telling me, and you can totally correct me if I'm wrong, is that maybe you feel a little bit displaced in your city and you're craving a lot of deeper connections. As an introvert, it's easier to have deeper connections and you crave that more than like the breadth of connections, and I really encourage you to lean into that need for connection and need for the roots. I know just from our communication in the past that you are a person to stay in touch and to encourage people.

I would really encourage you to lean into that and know that that is your kind of MO. I don't think we need to shy away from the way that we are, and I think Christina is an introvert, so she could probably speak more to this.

[0:28:41.4] CS: No. I'm just thinking this is why Reina is a life coach and I am not. I don't have intuition.

[0:28:50.9] RP: Yes, you do.

[0:28:50.9] CS: That's super encouraging, because I think sometimes I follow a lot of really talented women in the industry and a lot of them are doing so many awesome things and I feel like, "Oh, I just moved and I'm trying to make one thing work." I am, I'm introverted, and so trying to put all of your everything out at one time, or for an entire year. Yeah, just super encouraging to hear that, because I think there are probably other people like me out there that it is hard.

[0:29:23.6] CS: For sure. We hear a lot of them.

[0:29:25.0] RP: Yeah. Another thing too is that you guys decided that you were going to take this Europe trip, and I remember before you left for this trip you emailed me and I was like, "This is amazing." That was one of the reasons why we decided to go to Japan for the whole month of

May. Just hearing from people that you decide and you make it happen is really encouraging. This is just the same. It's just a different scene and a different chapter in your life.

Really cheering you on, and I can't wait to hear what happened in Charlottesville and if you have to come up to D.C. and hang out.

[0:29:57.2] AC: Yes.

[0:29:58.7] RP: Yeah, thank you for sharing with us, and I know the sharing process is a little bit challenging, so we're really grateful that you came on and shared what your empire looks like right now and hopefully that it keeps growing. Congratulations.

[0:30:13.2] AC: Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you.

[0:30:16.8] RP: Awesome. For everyone listening, I hope you take a little bit of encouragement from this episode from Amy and that if you're going through a transition like this, whether it's moving or mamahood or whatever, you go out and decide what's going to happen and go build your creative empire.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:30:31.0] 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]