

EPISODE — BROOKE SAXON-SPENCER

[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]

[0:00:35.5] RP: Welcome back to another episode of the Creative Empire Podcast, this is Reina and I'm here with Christina.

[0:00:40.6] CS: Hey guys.

[0:00:42.3] RP: We have a really special guest today, we're talking to Brooke of Belong Magazine and we are so excited to talk to you Brooke, thank you so much for coming on the show.

[0:00:49.9] BSS: Thanks for having me.

[0:00:51.4] RP: Brooke founded the Belong magazine out of her desire for community, a desire to encourage women, to use their voices and be confident in the work that they're doing and I got to connect with Brooke, I don't know Brooke, how long was it? Maybe...

[0:01:04.9] BSS: It's a few months ago.

[0:01:05.4] RP: Yeah, three or four months ago and we just had a coffee chat, we connected and I love the work that she's doing so if you haven't had a chance to check out Belong Mag, I really encourage you to do it. So Brooke, we're so excited to talk to you and we're actually going to be starting off the conversation with something that we talked about on our coffee chat, which

was about what it means or what it feels like to be an introvert in a very extroverted creative community.

[0:01:30.9] BSS: Yeah, we spent a while talking about that because I consider myself an extreme introvert and it's tough being an introvert in the entrepreneurial world especially because so many women that are out there, they're so vivacious and so energetic and I feel so not like that. I'm exhausted just looking at them and if I ever even end up in a room with them, because I'm happy to just that at home behind my computer.

But it's really tough and I feel that often, introverts kind of get a bad rap because they're considered snobby or aloof or whatever, when really it comes down to personality and sometimes even insecurity. It's been kind of a rough and rocky road but I've found some tricks that had helped me and kind of taken it from there and then just embrace the fact that that's just me.

[0:02:27.9] RP: I love that. Christina is going to super relate.

[0:02:27.6] CS: Yeah, I feel like you know Reina and I intimately right now because you're just ticking off our relationship and the contrast between us. Yeah, this is great. So I'd be interested to know what tips you found because I'm an INTJ on the Meyer's Briggs. Would you guys care to share what you guys are?

[0:02:45.4] BSS: I have no idea.

[0:02:46.0] CS: No?

[0:02:46.8] BSS: It's been so long since I took that test.

[0:02:49.5] RP: Brooke's an I.

[0:02:51.0] CS: Definitely an I. It's such a great test and then there's also the Enneagram. So I don't know if anybody's tried the Enneagram yet and there's so many of them out there. But Brooke, you mentioned some tips. So I'd be curious to hear what some of those are.

[0:03:04.3] BSS: The first thing that I found is helpful is going to events with someone that's an extrovert, which I know sounds like perfect for the two of you, right? It's a great combination and it's not always possible obviously but when it is, it has been so helpful for me, I have a friend who she'll introduce me and then I'll feel comfortable, I'll introduce her and so it gets me talking and you know. It feels a lot more comfortable when someone says, "Hey, this is Brooke, she does *Belong Magazine*," and I feel like I'm bragging whenever I'm saying who I am or what I do and I don't like that. Telling someone who you are and what you do isn't bragging, it's just telling them the facts but for me it feels like really awkward.

So having someone else do that for me and I can reciprocate and do that for them because I could talk about them all day and the great things they're doing and I'm comfortable with that. That has been really great and just kind of feeling like I have an anchor of some sort so that I'm not floating around like completely by myself, even if I'm not chatting with people, I'm at least part of something and not sitting in a seat looking at my phone where no one is going to come talk to me.

That has been I think the biggest thing that I've kind of taken away from the last couple of conferences that I've been at where the more you get into things, the more you grow your circle. So it's hard you know, at the beginning when you really don't know anyone but if you can latch on to someone who does have a bigger personality, it can certainly help because they'll introduce you to other people and it just kind of trickles from there. I'm fine once I get into conversation, it's just breaking through you know? It's just the walking through the door, it's the introduction. So having a little side kick that can help me with that is perfect.

[0:04:50.0] RP: I think that's so spot on. So Christina and I are kind of opposites in that way. I'm an ENFJ, so very much extraverted, love being with people. But there's so many things that I could pull out of what you said. I love going with introverts because I feel like I like to serve as an introvert ally. I get where you're coming from and a lot of my introverted friends, many of my friends are introverted and it's really funny to see them like kind of shy away. But when they go with an extrovert, they really do shine because what they want is not to feel alone but they can also connect.

You guys do so well in intimate connection relationships and if I can foster that immediate connection, that's a win for me. I can flit around and go somewhere else but you guys are still having a great conversation and I absolutely love that. So for extraverts, that's great for us to know like if you're going with an introvert, know that you can make that connection and make it easier just whether it's an obstruction or just whatever that next step is.

So Brooke, what do you think is an advantage? Because often we talk about introversion as being like a disadvantage but I think there are plenty of advantages by you being an introvert. What are some of those things that you found in growing your business, being in the corporate world in terms of being an introvert?

[0:06:05.7] BSS: Well there are lots just like there are lots of advantages of being an extrovert. I don't know how many people have heard of, or read or familiar with the book *Quiet*. I actually, I'll have to admit, I did not read the whole thing cover to cover because there's a lot of very, I want to say scientific, but it goes really in depth into basically the introversion, extroversion, the differences there and she points out that we've kind of built up our society to value extroverts, "Nice, Reina has it in her hand."

It really points out that we value extroverts or society values extroverts more literally values them more and that introverts are seen as less than in some way and she points out in several different examples that throughout history of individuals who were extreme introverts who became incredibly influential and I think Henry Ford was named very influential and changing the world. But they were this behind the scenes kind of people, they weren't out there, they were afraid of people and yet they were very, very intelligent and very detail oriented.

And I hesitate to lump and to put people in boxes because I don't think that's fair. I think that you can be a great blend of both introvert and extrovert. You can be artistic and an extrovert. It doesn't work, you know, it's not a cut and dry thing. But it was interesting to see her point out though that so many of the characteristics that we so often kind of downplay and think that are considered less than or not as important or maybe not as visible that those are actually totally undervalued and that we introverts are pretty good people too.

It was kind of a pat on the back and, like I said, I didn't read it cover to cover so forgive me but the parts that I kind of thumbed through the whole thing and I really appreciate what you had to say about the value and I think that she was spot on as how it's perceived and I think that one of the important things is that embracing, that if you are an introvert, that's who you are, that's okay. You don't have to force yourself to be something that you're not, you just have to find ways to adapt to the different situations that you're in.

This is going to sound horrible, but it's almost like living with the disability. You learn how to adapt those things and by no means this introversion a disability. So I don't want to stretch it that far but, you know, extroverts have to learn how to tone it down sometimes and introverts have to learn how to crank it up sometimes. But there are things that we can both do that will help us kind of come together and see each other's value and I think that the relationship like you two have is great because you complement one another very well and that's exactly what I think we need to be doing is finding where our gifts are used most and plugging them in. So yeah.

[0:09:05.7] CS: Yeah, thanks Brooke. Do you feel like you've been able to do that well with the magazine? I mean, how much of where you're coming from, how much of that gets poured into the magazine, versus you could have created a podcast or some other media? Where did the inspiration for the magazine come from and how much does your ability to connect with people, not only through words but kind of through an indirect means.

You're not exactly having, I don't want to say that you're not having conversations because you are. You're doing interviews, you're doing things but you have the time like a good introvert and I appreciate this to go back and edit it and revamp things or change things versus right now, we're talking live and we can edit things out, but for the most part, this is what it's going to be. So how much did your introversion play in to the fact that you decided to create a magazine versus something else?

[0:09:56.3] BSS: It played a big part I think. The magazine kind of rewinding a bit, the magazine came out of this desire for finding my place, just like everybody wants to find like their niche and so that's where belong came from and the word itself kind of popped into my head several years ago and I wanted to start like a little mastermind group or like a little blogger's group or

whatever. But I just never got to it and it came out of this desire to connect with people and I was having a really hard time even online.

I started a blog and I was like, "All right, I'm here, I'm in," and then nothing. You actually have to do something still. You can't just sit there and have the world come to you, it doesn't work like that as much as I'd like it to. I spent years trying to figure that out. Years is terrible, I know but I was working the full time job doing other things and we all know that blogging can be a full time job all by itself. But it just, I felt like I couldn't find my place and I knew that it had to be there, I knew that there were people out there that could relate to me and I could relate to and that we could serve each other well with our gifts and talents and encourage one another and I knew that that was out there but I just didn't know where to find it.

So I'm an extremely tactile person and I have a background in photography, graphic design, and creative writing and I was sort of offered this opportunity to kind of reinvent myself with my healthcare career job coming to an end and so I was lucky enough to think, "Well, if I could do anything, what would I do?" Having spent 17 years doing this one thing, this healthcare piece, which wasn't feeding my creative side at all. I was like, "Well these passions that I had, my educational background, what could I plug those into?" And magazine just seem to really make sense.

And it allowed me like you said, it allowed me to stay behind the scenes to a degree where I didn't have to put myself, my face out there a lot and be vocal and you still have to be present and I still honestly really struggle with it as far as going to events and what not. But there's so much that I can do and so many ways that I can be me and be real through social media and blog posts and I feel like there has been a lot of people that I have connected with that we can really relate to one another just through social media and it can be a really beautiful thing.

One of the purposes of Belong is to be like a navigational system so that when you go on to the web and you're like, "Okay, I am looking for a conference, a creative conference." You type in "creative conference" and where do you go from there? "Well that's not what I was thinking, or that's not quite right." It's to give people some resources, a place to start and a pretty place to start, something that's fun to look at, other resources in there but that's what I was looking for, I

was looking for other people kind of like myself who had this interest and I just had no clue where to go.

There are different communities that are featured that are at the magazine which because I honestly believe that not everyone belongs everywhere. So often we want to be like, "Well we're all inclusive." Well, we are all inclusive to a degree but there's just some places I don't belong. I don't belong in some men in business circles, there's no place for me there. But there is a place for me within a group here and having small groups of intimate relationships that are life giving is really important to me.

And that's kind of what I hope to foster and on the introvert side, those are the ones that like, that's what feeds me as an introvert on the relational side. Going to a conference is like, "Lay me down, I'm exhausted and I can't think for five days afterwards." But get me connected with a couple of people and let us hash out everything, talk about ourselves and I'm good. I hope that *Belong* has kind of fostered that for some people or at least started conversations for some people.

[0:14:00.0] RP: I think you totally have done that and it sounds to me like you have also, in the midst of all of this, found your people as well and it's a beautiful thing. I love just, since I connected with you, I think the second addition was out when we talked and now you're about to have lots and lots more and I wonder, what tips do you have for likeminded introverts or even extroverts I guess to be able to find where they belong in this community?

[0:14:28.9] BSS: I'll say this, and I can say it from experience, that sometimes you have to reach out and it can be on social media, it can be through an email. It doesn't have to be a phone call or something that's way out of your comfort zone and you have to be prepared to get no's. But if you see something that is attractive to you or someone that is attractive to you that you feel like you want to connect with, connect with them. Start a dialogue.

An example and this is a great example of taking things from the online sphere to the offline, which is also important to me is that I saw a blog post like a year and a half ago from a blogger that I had kind of followed for years and on and off and she changed her blog thing and you know, she changed her whole style but I kind of intermittently caught her blog post and I saw

this one where she, it's random. She posted about like how she, this woman at her church had asked her to go out for coffee and she said yes and what an amazing time it was. So sometimes you just need to leave room in your life for those opportunities to say yes.

I was like, "Well that's cool," and I had found out that we had a mutual friend and that we had moved to California since I first started calling her and she lived nearby and I was like, "I'm going to shoot her an email. She's been around for a while, she's really pretty well known, she's never going to respond to me." And I just shot her an email and I'm like, "You know that blogpost where you said yes to that lady to have coffee? Well, forgive me for being pseudo stalker but would you have coffee with me? I would really love that," and she said yes again.

It's just, our first coffee, we spent three and a half hours just talking about everything and we're really good friends now and she's my conference buddy and we're not competitors in any way, we're supporters of one another, even if there's overlap, it's been a really beautiful thing and I remind myself, "All it took was for me to just reach out with an email and look at the friendship that I have. It's worth it."

So that is the biggest thing is if you see someone that is attractive to, just reach out because the worst they could do is not respond or say no and if they do respond, you just never know how things could develop from there and maybe other people are afraid to reach out to them and they're feeling lonely, you just don't know. You don't know what's happening on the other side of the screen. That would be my biggest encouragement.

[0:16:48.6] RP: Reach out and go find somebody who you want to connect with I guess is the big tip. Have you had any other instances besides your conference bestie when you reached out and had a yes that turned into something fruitful?

[0:17:03.1] BSS: Yeah, it's an example of how you can find the people you're looking for online and as an introvert, it was a relationship with the designer who works in the magazine with me. I found her through this rabbit hole search on Instagram one day. You click on somebody's picture and then you're like, "Oh it's taken by this person." So I'll click on that and you go, go, go. The next thing I knew I was looking at this publication spread photo and I was like, "I really like that, that's kind of like my vibe here and what I'm looking for this magazine and I could use

some help,” and then I clicked on her and she gets me. We have spoken on the phone once in over a year and yet we have this like — we’re like a power team I feel like.

[0:17:46.7] CS: Can we plug her? I love her too.

[0:17:48.4] BSS: Yes. Her name is Laura Kashner and she does amazing work and she has made my dream a really on paper for me like the design skills that I don’t have because my education was pre digital, that ages me smidge. But it was going to be a huge learning curve for me to try to figure out how to use all the Adobe products and all that. It seemed like it would be a better idea just to pull somebody in that knew how to do that and Laura has been that. She’s done an amazing job and it just yeah, it blows my mind how she gets it, how she gets me, how she knows the vision and has kind of just, we just keep going and it’s been a wonderful experience.

So even in working relationships, it can really pay to reach out and just ask questions and inquire and it was really cool to hear that, and I know she’s doing several different things now, but it was very cool to hear right when we first started talking that publication design was something that she was very passionate about and that she was wanting to do more of. So it was not only a win for me that I found someone who got it but a win for her. So those are just those moments where you were like, it’s just amazing and it feels good, it feels really good.

[BREAK]

[0:19:03.7] CS: How would it feel if someone laid out a business plan, a road map or some kind of strategy that would get you started and get you closer to the goals that you dream of accomplishing in your business? Well, Reina and I actually have done this. 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]

[0:19:45.7] CS: Yeah, that organic connection in business is so crucial. I had a couple of businesses before this, not the podcast but my main business, which is obviously legal products and a third law firm. But it was funny because every time I started a blog and I won't go into the whole history, you can learn about that somewhere else. But it was very inorganic for a long time and it was just like hitting wall after wall and for a long time I thought that I didn't belong anywhere. I thought that this just wasn't the community for me, it wasn't the sphere for me, I tried to teach yoga, that was very unwelcoming, and it just the whole thing was like, "I'm just not meant to be an entrepreneur, I'm not meant to do this."

I'm so glad that the right shift of events happened and then all of this that I have now happened very organically and so, I don't know what the key is to finding that organic growth but it sounds to me like you've had a good experience of this organic growth with not only your business partnerships and collaborations but also with the magazine. Do you think that there is something that you could do if you're just starting out and you are looking for something that's more organic and feels really good, doesn't feel salesy, it doesn't feel pitchy. Do you think there's some strategies or tactics that a beginning business owner could use to enjoy this really nice supportive feeling?

[0:21:05.2] BSS: It is hard and it's really, and I still feel like I'm on the outside half the time. I'm like, "I don't know what I'm doing, everyone else seems to have it all together," and then I remind myself, "Let's be real, they don't have it together either." Everyone does put up this really great façade of — think of Instagram, "That looks so pretty all the time," and I guess my biggest advice would be first of all, the stuff that you're putting out, make sure that it's authentic. It can be pretty but especially with your words, make sure that you're being authentic because I think that that's really key to making those relationships.

People want you, they don't just want the pretty picture. The issue that's coming out is about hospitality and that was actually one of — it's one of the things that I've been thinking through as far as what is the mistake we make when it comes to hospitality and one of them is like, well you stay an introvert, in the kitchen. "Hey, I'll just cook and do the dishes and make sure that everything stays clean and tidy," and I had to remember like hospitality is not about a clean

house, it's about people and it's about being present. I know it sounds stupid that I would have to remind myself of that.

[0:22:11.9] CS: No, I need you in my life for this.

[0:22:14.7] BSS: Yes. One of the goals of this issue is to expand our view and our perspective of hospitality from beyond our homes but to the online sphere because that's where we spend most of our time. We're relating to people that way, so learning how to be hospitable and welcoming is so key. So that's a lot of what the hospitality issue talks about but I think the authenticity is really key and being present. You have to make the effort to find people.

You were saying like how would a new entrepreneur kind of find their place and find the place where they're comfortable? It does take some time and effort just like everything does and as much as you'd like to be able to hop in both feet and be like, "Okay good, I'm there." You know, it's really not quite that easy, identifying individuals or groups that kind have what you're looking for and seeing, I think a lot of times, there's women that comment on post that I put up about like, "Oh my gosh, I can totally relate to that," and then I see people commenting to their comments. "Oh my goodness, we need to connect because I can totally relate to that," and their comments and it kind of goes around in a circle.

So you have to be present and involved and kind of find your way into those. You might not find the right spot right away. But I think jumping into a gigantic group probably isn't going to feel as welcoming but even in some of those big Facebook groups, there are smaller groups of women who collaborate together and who really know each other really well, that they still, you are part of this larger group that lends their expertise all around and I think that's great. I think Facebook is another great place to get connected. It's not my favorite, I'm an Instagram girls but.

[0:24:00.2] CS: You're killing it at Instagram.

[0:24:03.1] BSS: Well I'm trying, but no. We just started a belong collective Facebook group and it's not intended to be a business-y type thing, it's intended to be more of "come as you are, ask stupid questions related to business, related to whatever". It's meant to be a kind of a forum

for people to kind of just be real and throw stuff out there and encourage one another and sometimes I think, people kind of lurk around in there and put yourself out there.

You just never know who is going to see it and who is going to be like, “Oh my gosh, that’s exactly what I need or that’s exactly what I needed to hear,” or whatever. The hardest part is just putting yourself out there.

[0:24:41.3] RP: What has been the biggest? I totally agree with that. Putting yourself out there is super scary especially when you’re starting something out and I feel like even though you’re an introvert, you’ve started this movement with *Belong Magazine*. You made people who didn’t have a home before feel like they have somewhere they can come to, which is such a blessing and I really want to acknowledge you for having done that.

I’m sure people in your life who are like, “Oh, she does this magazine thing,” they don’t get the gravity of what you’re doing. Just let me tell you, you are doing amazing work. I totally forgot my original question but I think it was around, what has been the biggest benefit for you as the producer of this magazine? What stories have you learned? What connections have been the most influential, whatever?

[0:25:26.6] BSS: Yeah, as an introvert where this is going to sound horrible, relationships are important to me but as an introvert and a creative, there is something extremely rewarding about holding this piece in my hands and be like, “Oh my goodness, I did this. I did this. People are seeing it and they’re responding to it.” That’s crazy amazing to me and just the fact that I can, I even told my husband and friends after the very first issue, I’m like, “If this is as far as it comes, wow, check this out. It’s in paper.”

I think we so often forget to celebrate the little victories, we get so far ahead of ourselves thinking, “Well I want *Belong* to be this huge company that we’re in every grocery store,” and whatever. I think we forget to celebrate the smaller things. Each issue is a victory, each blog post is a victory. Every time you get an email from someone saying, “Thank you for doing what you do.” Like, wow, that’s huge. You reached someone and that’s important and it’s important to celebrate those things.

And that's what's been so rewarding for me is thinking, "Oh my goodness," on the creative type side and like, "Holy crap, this is my thing. I printed this thing, put it together," and then on the other side, seeing the fruits of that and you don't always get that and you don't always get to hear it because people don't always share it, if you're listening, share it please because I love to share it. It is so great to see it when it comes back in and it's really nice to hear about other women who have connected through their services, through the magazine or whatever and kind of teamed up together, I love that.

I love to see the collaboration and people meeting one another and it's just beautiful to see because the idea was to give people a place where they felt like they had a place and that they mattered and it's very hard to do that on a super large scale. So the bigger you get, the harder that becomes and I think we're at a nice size where it's still manageable. But I just love the personal touches like you said. The emails that come to me, I try to respond to everyone I actually get. Some emails never get to me and I don't know how that happens, but it's not intentional if I don't respond.

[0:27:39.3] RP: Oh technology.

[0:27:40.8] BSS: Holy cow, I got an email from someone yesterday and she was like, "I emailed you a month ago," and I was like, "I never got it, I'm so sorry." But yeah, it's just really cool to see the accomplishment and in all honesty and as an entrepreneur, I think that most people can relate to that, like you actually did something. You took a step of faith and you started something and you made, whether it was relationships, you gained clients, you created whatever. I think that's really big.

Now, you know, the next step is how do you make it a profitable business? And there's the little steps. Just because you made it doesn't mean it's like bringing in the cash, it still takes work but it's so important to celebrate the little things.

[0:28:22.4] CS: I'm so glad you just said that. Because I think so many people see anybody rise to whatever, internet fame, Instagram fame, whatever you want to call it. People get visible and immediately we think, "Oh my gosh, they must be making five figure, six figures, whatever a month." It's a myth that it's perpetuated by the industry. I love Adrienne Dorison and Shanna

Skidmore as well, they both promote the principle that you need to find you're enough. Adrienne talked about that on her podcast, I forget the name of her podcast.

[0:28:56.2] RP: The School of Self-Mastery.

[0:28:57.8] CS: Yes, Adrienne talked about it on her podcast in her one year anniversary episode where she was talking about basically she was trying to figure out how to replace her income for a long time and then she realized that she didn't have to replace her income. She just had to figure out what was enough for her. So Brooke, it sounds like, and Shanna talks about this all the time as well.

It sounds like you're talking about kind of about the same thing where you need to celebrate the little wins and those little ones maybe, what's enough for you and that might be a huge victory in your own life and just because it doesn't compare — what's the phrase? Don't compare your beginning to someone else's middle or end?

[0:29:31.5] BSS: Exactly.

[0:29:32.2] CS: That sounds like what you're talking about here. I don't really have a question, I'm so glad that you said that because...

[0:29:39.7] BSS: Well, and there is that illusion and it bugs me as well and I know that this podcast, depending on when it's heard may or may not be applicable but Belong is not making money right now. Nobody knows that. It looks like it's bringing in the cash, right? It's actually not yet. I would love for it to get there because at some point here soon, I'm going to actually have to get a real job if I want to continue doing this.

So appearances don't mean anything, you know? You could be the smallest of companies and be bringing in tons of cash, you just don't know what's behind the scenes. I get tons of questions like, "Why is shipping so expensive or why is the magazine so expensive?" And I'm thinking, "I'm footing some of that. I'm trying my best to keep it as inexpensive as possible but I'm doing my best." The illusion out there is like, well, you've come this far, you must be at a different, you must be at that point where you're successful.

[0:30:39.9] RP: Right, like visibility should be profit right? How many Instagram followers should mean how much money you're bringing in and that's not necessarily true. I so appreciate you saying that.

[0:30:49.7] BSS: Yeah, I don't mean to be super blunt or off, I know we were on the introvert topic.

[0:30:53.7] RP: No, it's totally fine. This is good, real talk.

[0:30:57.8] BSS: I try to be, that's when I stay off that deck, I try to be an open book with my followers as well and with the community, just because well, I think it's encouraging to some people to see that, "Oh my goodness, even after all that, even after all a year, it's still not making money. Oh well then if I'm a year into my business and I'm not making money, I'm not alone. It's an okay place to be." And I think that we forget sometimes because we see so much of what looks successful and that comes down to redefining success, in my opinion. but we all want to see our businesses fruitful and the easiest way to see the fruit is through dollar signs and I think that what you were saying is just knowing what's enough for you is really important.

Obviously the bills need to get paid and that's one of the things, there's been a little dialogue on Instagram lately with some of my community about, there's so much, and even Belong even push it, "Just begin, if you have a dream, there's never the right time, you're never going to have enough money, just do it." Somebody kind of pushed back on me and I appreciated it, she was like, "Well sometimes you have to put in the time to pay the bills, to be able to do your dream," and I completely agree, I'm in that boat. I'm actually working three jobs.

People don't know that either, I'm doing the magazine on top of a full time job, still in health care and a consulting job. I'm putting in the work elsewhere so that Belong can be a possibility. It's not what it looks like and you do often have to put in time doing something you may not love to get you to a point where you can do what you do love full time. There are instances where you have to take a leap to really invest in what it is that you want but that's not the case for everyone everywhere.

So I think it was a really good push back and I appreciate it a lot that you kind of need to tweak the message a bit because what it seems is not always what it should be. The “just begin”, the next step could be just saying, “I want to be able to do this in five years or I’m going to come up with a business name.” It doesn’t mean you’re starting a full time business next month, could still start following your dreams, it just might be a little slower and that’s great, that’s good too.

[0:33:07.9] RP: I so appreciate that. I think so many people who are listening are going to relate to like having that full time thing and they’re also working on their fun thing and I was in that boat when I left my job and then realized that I didn’t want to be a stay at home mom just being a stay at home and that’s me, that is just my story.

[0:33:29.2] CS: But we could have a whole podcast on that topic alone.

[0:33:30.3] RP: Totally girl. Absolutely. When I got another job, I was saying to myself, “This is the bridge that’s going to carry me to my entrepreneurial dream,” and that was an investment of my time and my energy and yeah it sucked to not be able to concentrate on Reina and Co for a while but it was the thing that allowed me to put my son back in daycare. It was a thing that allowed me to start investing into coaching training and all of that stuff. The front end of your business costs a little bit of money sometimes and for you...

[0:34:04.6] BSS: A lot a bit of money, right?

[0:34:07.8] RP: It was a lot of money.

[0:34:08.7] BSS: Especially with a physical product.

[0:34:11.2] RP: Yeah, physical product is so different and so I know one of my great friends Tonya Dalton talks about this all the time but like just because it looks like we have a lot of product, because we had a lot of stuff, we also have to pay for a lot of stuff, as she says. I think that’s so true. Yeah, I think there’s no illusion that everything always is perfect and I appreciate you kind of like, you know.

[0:34:33.9] BSS: Well, I feel so often that I have a problem with it too, you go on Facebook and you're like, "Oh but that person looks like they got it all together, they're talking about their six figure income, how they did it in a year," and I'm thinking, "Whoa, what am I doing wrong?" And then I have to step back and think, "I'm right where I need to be, things are growing incrementally in a pretty fast actually but celebrate my victories and where I've come and I don't need to look at what they're doing and I'm going to do what I need to do to make my thing happen and that's okay. That's enough."

And everybody's story is going to be a little different. They're going to manage their entrepreneurial dreams a little bit different and I think it's just like telling everyone, "Well your story matters and it's valid, you're worthy. Just because it doesn't fit in to the cookie cutter mold of you quit your day job and just jumped into it and you were successful three months later. That's okay, you don't have to be that. You be you and I'll be me and let's just roll with it."

[0:35:38.4] RP: I love that. There are so many reasons why we feel like we can't celebrate and I think you're reminding us to take all those small or big wins to really acknowledge what you've done and I'm guessing that you're like we are, Christina and I are both achievers and we like to see the fruits of our labor and that might be money but it also might be your tangible magazine in your hands, which you have five of now, let's celebrate that, right? That's so incredible. I can't wait to order mine. Another thing I was going to say is that you're also in Barnes & Noble. Huge win, can you talk a little bit about that?

[0:36:16.2] BSS: Yeah, that is a real blessing. Like I said, I have no idea what I'm doing, I still don't know what I'm doing and thankfully for the most part, the creative entrepreneurial world is very gracious because a lot of people don't know what they're doing and we're learning together as we go. It's not always the case but in most cases it is. And starting I realized, "Well, in order to get the magazine to a point where it's going to be profitable, that was distribution is obviously really important."

I actually sent, I did a pilot issue which was really small, it was like 60 pages and then our first issue I sent to them that you have to go through their distributor but I sent to the distributor like five samples and they have like a committee meeting where they, the distributor decides what they want to present to Barnes & Noble, that they think Barnes & Noble might want to consider

carrying in their stores and then the Barnes & Noble team decides which stores and how many and all that good stuff.

I was very fortunate I think that our very first issue was accepted. Like they saw it and they were like, “Yes.” It was actually not till issue three that actually made it to the stores because of all the timing of everything but to have your third issue on the shelves at Barnes & Noble, that was really fast and the other illusion to that is that is not a money maker unless you are producing thousands and thousands of magazines because the magazines print cost is still high and you only get paid from Barnes & Noble for what sells and they throw away what doesn’t which means you’re getting nothing for those.

It’s tricky, it’s great but it’s like, it can hurt you on the other side and I’m excited to be there and having drawn of our community from people see it on the shelves and they’re attracted to it, that’s where it gets me, knowing that the community is growing because of that and Barnes & Noble actually just doubled their order for this next issue so hopefully more people will have the opportunity to find it. It’s been selling out of a lot of stores so hopefully that will happen. Well hey, hopefully it does still happen but hopefully that means that more people will be able to find it when they’re looking for it.

[0:38:25.3] RP: Brooke, that’s exciting, that’s so, my gosh, that’s incredible.

[0:38:28.5] BSS: That’s a huge victory. Like I say, “celebrate the small victories.” I’m like, “That’s just like,” — sometimes it’s hard to wrap your head around. You’re like, “Oh my goodness, that’s like a really big deal.” But yeah, that’s just an encouragement, “Okay, I’m on the right track, I’m doing something right.” So yeah, it is big and it’s fun.

[0:38:46.7] RP: Well I appreciate how candid you’ve been and just how honest and authentically you show up in the world. I know our audience is going to get so much from this interview. We don’t have a lot of product based entrepreneurs who come on our show and maybe we should find more of them but we’re super excited to have you here and I know our audience is just going to eat this one up.

So we're going to ask you one last question before we let you go which is, if you were to encourage somebody who is in their newer part of their career in entrepreneurship? How would you encourage them to go build their creative empire?

[0:39:23.1] BSS: This is my canned answer because I say it all the time. Just take the next step. If you get too wrapped up and what tends to stop ahead, you're going to miss the next step and often, your steps are going to direct you to different places. So if you're thinking about step 10, you don't know that maybe it's step four you're going to go a different way. You know, you'll run into something new or things might evolve into something different and that's okay. It's good to have big goals but it's okay to take small steps towards them.

And I say, "Don't feel overwhelmed by the big picture, just take the next step and then take the next one and then the next one and eventually you'll get there and then there will still be steps after that." But that's, I think what, as a new entrepreneur, that's how I had to look at it because it was very overwhelming and I didn't know what I was doing, I still don't, you just think, there's no way I can do this, I want it but I don't know how and you just bite it off one bit at a time and that's how you eventually get somewhere.

[0:40:23.6] RP: Wonderful, where can everyone find you?

[0:40:26.1] BSS: You can find me at belong-mag.com or on most social media channels, it's just *Belong mag*. No, I'm not on Snapchat or Periscope because I'm an introvert and the video thing scares the crap out of me.

[0:40:42.7] RP: That's all right, you're at Barnes & Noble and you can buy all the issues on your website, right?

[0:40:49.3] BSS: Absolutely.

[0:40:51.0] RP: Fantastic. Well, thank you so much Brooke.

[0:40:54.1] BSS: Thanks guys.

[0:40:54.0] RP: we'll see you on the next episode and go build your creative empire.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:41:00.2] 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]