

Called to Both Episode 12

When I look at my business today, it is very different from the one that I started in 2013. My days look different, my goals look different. And even how I make money is very different now.

Hello, and welcome to the call to both podcast, I'm your host Joy Michelle, and you're in the right place. If you're ready to grow your business, while also being the intentional and present mom, you want to be, this show will leave you feeling inspired, equipped with tangible tips and encouraged to go after your own version of being called spoke. Let's dive in.

So today, I want to share with you how I made this pivot. And what this actually looked like for me to go from a wedding photographer to an educator and a coach, and how I went from working evenings and weekends primarily to now a 20 hour work week that takes place Monday through Thursday 8am to 1pm, I'm going to be answering a few key questions that I've been asked pretty frequently. And I put out a poll on my Instagram asking what you all wanted to know about this pivot. And so I'm going to make sure that I circle around and specifically answer some of those at the end, I think I've shared bits and pieces of this journey from the start of my business to now. But never all in one place where I really just lay out like what this looked like for me. And the key mile markers, if you will, of my business timeline and the things that I did to make this pivot the decisions that I made and walk you through a little bit of like what was happening behind the scenes and in my mind, because I think so much of pivoting is a lot of decisions and what's happening with us mentally.

So I'm going to walk you guys through some of the timeline of my business. And I have five key lessons that I've learned that I want to share with you. If you've thought about pivoting or you'd really like to pivot your business, I'd like to share these five things with you. Because I think they're going to really help you to make that pivot in a way that's really going to benefit you in your business.

So taking it all the way back to the start of where it all began. 2013 I started my business I filed for my LLC that year, I bought my domain name Joe, Michelle photography.com, I went to my first workshop called the Business Essentials workshop, which was actually life changing for me. And it was such a fantastic way to start my business. I started second shooting that year. And it was the same year I was graduating from the University of Maryland. And I just knew that I didn't want to work in an office. But I didn't know what was coming next. I actually looked into grad school at the time just for a minute to see what to do. Because I wasn't really sure what next step to make. Truthfully, I knew that I was interested in photography, but I had only taken one photography class in college. And it was just a film class where you develop your own film and stuff like that. So the idea of starting my own photography business felt like a big jump, even though I had an art degree and I was creative. But ultimately I decided to give myself a year to grow Joy Michelle photography instead of going to grad school. And I'm really glad that I did. I filed for my LLC, I think it's in July, because I have a certificate, I have that LLC certificate that comes in the mail, and it's somewhere in my files, but I remember July being on there. So I really just had a few remaining months of the year to build out my business.

And 2014 was my first full year as a photographer, I did more second shooting, I booked some of my own weddings. And I think I made like \$20,000 or something in total. From my own business that year.

Now 2015 There was a bit of a shift in momentum for my business and I booked 15 of my own weddings. I was featured in style a pretty, I was doing lots of styled shoots, and I continued to book weddings at higher and higher price point. I was always very clear in my mind on shooting luxury waterfront Annapolis weddings. And so that was my focus. That was the brand that I had built. And I was really dialed in on that. And so I was incrementally raising those prices and angling higher and higher.

So by 2017 I'd say I started toying with the idea of starting a YouTube channel because I have learned so much from other people on YouTube. I really enjoyed the platform as a consumer. And I remember I followed a handful of photographers, some of them had maybe 15 or 20,000 subscribers. And the way that I saw them was truly like celebrities like I looked up to them so much I was so bought into what they did, I would buy their stuff and I was I just really loved it and so I uploaded my first book Yo, in 2017, I edited that video on iMovie. And it's still on my channel today. It's called what's in my camera bag. I worked really hard on it. And it's, it's just it's my first video. So if you ever want to go back and see where it all began, you still can, I haven't archived any of that stuff because I think it's really cool to just see where someone's channel begin.

Now by 2018, I committed to uploading weekly to YouTube. And that's the same year that I started photo boss, my Facebook group, which still runs today. And at the time, I just wanted to see if I could monetize what I was doing with YouTube. So I was enjoying what I was doing. I was creating this stuff. I was photographing weddings. At the same time, I was traveling for weddings, I was going to New York or DC or Baltimore, Virginia, Delaware, mostly just east coast here. But everything was growing on the photography side. And I was sharing a lot of what I was learning as a photographer over on the YouTube side. And then I decided, okay, let's, let's see if we can monetize this. Let's see what we can do with it. So I then. So thinking back to how I did this, I think I went into my Facebook group and I, I Okay, I remember what I did. I went into my Facebook group. And as people were coming into this Facebook group, I would ask them questions about what they were facing in their businesses. And so I use this as almost like a market research to really try to figure out where these photographers were at as they came into my business. And so I knew their biggest pain points. And I knew that attracting and booking clients marketing and branding, were two big struggles for my audience. And a lot of them wanted to be wedding photographers, a lot of them wanted to be booking, higher end weddings, certain clientele get paid more be profitable, that kind of thing. So what I decided to do was I decided to launch a beta program to my Facebook group, before it was ever actually fully created. And it was based around this idea of helping them to attract and book Dream brides. So I launched this to my Facebook group, I think I had a few 100 people in the group at the time. I think the price point for this, I could go into like PayPal or wherever I did this and try to figure this out, but I'm almost 100% Sure, it was around \$300 like 297 and I had 11 People join that beta program. My goal was to help those 11 people learn how to market and build a marketing strategy that would help them consistently book their dream brides without relying on paid ads. So this program has become my flagship course hook and book brides which is still available in my shop today and has been taken by 100 photographers from around the world. So that was happening while I was also photographing weddings. So lots of stuff going on in 2018. I also got pregnant with my first child in 2018.

And so in 2019, I had my first baby, I continued to shoot weddings while I was pregnant. And then after having Clara, I was still shooting weddings. And all the while I'm making YouTube videos, selling hook and book brides and I also started coaching that year. And that is when I fell in love with coaching in the

process of transforming businesses in this way. At the same time. So this is 2019, I started taking affiliate marketing more seriously. And I decided in 2020 that I was only going to book halfway through the year, and then give myself the second half of the year to focus on education.

So this is like the point I think where I was starting to feel like I couldn't expand education the way that I was wanting to, because I was still very tied up in the day to day of serving my brides editing, making albums, doing consultations, engagement sessions, styled shoots, I mean, it's a whole world, you know, if you're in the wedding world, it's it's kind of like a bubble. And I think that I was feeling that tension for a while. And that was like, it was such a hard thing to transition out of because as you know, weddings are booked, you know, a year to 18 months to two years out. And so you're really making decisions today as to what you're going to be doing in a year or beyond. And it started to get a little murky in my mind. Because I was so excited about the coaching I was doing with my clients. I was so excited about the program that I had created. I felt like I had more in me that I just frankly wasn't going to be able to tap into if I was still booking 20 weddings a year. So I made that commitment. And I started I only booked weddings through the first half of 2020. And I was so proud of myself for saying no to these weddings that were coming in for dates that I had committed to not accept. Now we all know how 2020 went. And I ended up having to push all those weddings from the beginning of 2020 to the fall because I felt like that was the right thing to do. was just to reschedule these weddings, because technically I was available. And so I did all of these weddings. I was also pregnant with Lewis at the time. So I did all those weddings while pregnant with him. And I mean fun side project would be to like, try to add up how many weddings I've done while pregnant, or postpartum, or breastfeeding, or all the things right. So did all those weddings completed those weddings, and at the same time, I am growing my audience as much as I can, right. So I'm not happy that I wasn't able to go through with my plan to transition this time and have these six dedicated months to really developing education. So everything kind of got moved around. And I wanted it to be this like succinct and beautiful thing. But that's not how it happened. But at the same time, I'm getting featured in podcasts. I'm trying to get interviewed, I'm continuing to grow my email list my YouTube channel, and I relaunched my my signature course hook and book brides a couple more times.

And the rubber really met the road when those 2021 inquiries were rolling in. And I had decided that I was not going to take anything for 2021, because they felt like it was this game of like kicking the can down the road of adding more to my plate, always saying, uh, hi, I need to launch a new education offering or do another mastermind or all the things right, I really, really wanted to give education, this space in my calendar that I had never had before, because I was feeling this fire in me to step more into education. But at the same time, you know, that's not an easy decision. Because I loved the weddings that I was shooting, I loved the brand that I had built, I had worked so dang hard to get into the luxury wedding market. And to just say, you know, what, we're not going to do weddings in 2021 was a really difficult decision. But I did it, I committed to it. And in 2021, just days before giving birth to my son, Louis, I rebranded to Joy michelle.co. So new domain, new website, new brand. And when I got back from maternity leave, after I think I took eight weeks off, I ended up producing and launching hobby to pro toolkit. And I had over 100 people join in five days. So this response was just crazy for me. And it was such a confirmation that the audience that I was building wanted more from me in terms of education in this, this world of education, there's so much more that I have to give to it. And I so that was like such an amazing confirmation of the move that I was making in 2021. I think 2021 In a lot of ways, was just a huge year of growth for me as a mom transitioning to than having two kids at home as a business owner building out my team a little bit, and truly just as a person. And I ended the year by signing the agreement for this podcast to pay for production, and help Hi, Haley for all of your help here

with the podcast. And if I didn't, if I didn't pay and sign that agreement, I just knew that it was never going to happen. Because it was something that I had been thinking about for a while. It was also in 2021 that the trademark for photo boss came through. And I added two team members to my team.

So that brings us to this year that brings us to 2022. So the YouTube channel and the Facebook group that started all of this are still rocking and rolling. And now we have added the call to both podcast and call to both Facebook group to the mix as well. And I plan on launching at least one more new product this year, I now offer three and six month coaching for creatives offers. And now that I really look at this, like when I when I actually sat down to like really write out this journey and answer the question of like, how did this transition happen? It was actually pretty slow. And I think I never felt particularly like calculated or smooth, at least to me in the direction of where things were going. But I've always tried to lean into what felt right and where I knew, like I was being called to next.

And so I have five lessons now looking at this now sitting on the other side with a business that looks very different than than the business that I started. In the beginning when I was a newlywed living in a condo and now sitting in my home upstairs in our tiny office bedroom here with my kids sleeping across the hall. Things look really different and I think I would just like to share with you five key takeaways that I've had through this journey of pivoting.

Alright, lesson number one is there is no right or perfect time to pivot. And I know I waited for the perfect time to start a YouTube channel. And that sent me back probably a good year. And I know it's the same with any decision waiting for the perfect time is a procrastination tactic. It's almost like procrastination and avoidance just dressed in a day For an outfit. And so, seeing this in my own life has made me very aware of this problem of waiting for perfection and perfectionism in my own life and how it affects my business. And I think that's why I decided before it was ready, before I had an outline for a single episode for this podcast, I was going to just pay the retainer for podcast production, because I knew if I didn't do that, it was never going to happen. Because there's never going to be a time or right time or perfect time, where I say, oh, now's the day, now's the day to get on to an entirely new platform, and do something I've never done before. And so I think making that decision and just deciding it's not going to be perfect, it's not going to be perfect timing. Like, if you could see me you'd see like air quote, fingers coming up. Because there's no such thing as perfect timing.

Lesson number two, is it's scary to step into what you really want and to grow to your next level. Is this really hard? And for me, I think it was a big identity shift, I went from knowing exactly how to introduce myself, when I walked into a room to then being like, Well, okay, hang on, I do a lot of different stuff. I have a YouTube channel, and of course, and I coach and I shoot, you know, people's images. And I do this. And now I have to step into a new identity. And I think for me, it was really important to like, separate what I was doing professionally from my identity a little bit. And I'm sure that's just an Enneagram thing, as a three over here, that I'm sure any other threes can identify with as well.

Lesson number three, is that no one is actually looking as closely at your business or freaking out about what you're doing, the way that you are. So I know for me, I cared a lot about how things looked and what people were going to think about these different shifts that I was taking. And while it isn't always a bad thing to be thinking about, okay, how is this going to be perceived, it can also be what holds you back, people just don't care that much about what you're doing. They're a lot more concerned with what they're doing and what their life has going on inside of it. So make the move your fans and the audience that you've built, they're going to be there for the shifts, there are people of course, that will

drop off. But there's also going to be people that are going to be so excited for you to step into your next level to, to ride along on this journey with you of where it is that you're going.

Lesson number four, you can love something, and you can be good at something, but not be meant to do that thing forever. And that is how I view weddings. And I think about the eight wedding seasons that I had, and the memories that I have the couples that I served and the work that I created with so much fondness, I mean, I almost I almost get emotional like, man, it was such an honor. But at the same time, it doesn't mean that I have to do that forever. And I think this is also a lesson of letting go of the good to make room for the great. And Gosh, darn it that is hard, there's so hard to be good at something and to like it, but to know in your core, that there's something more left for you to do. And who knows if I'll shoot another wedding, I have a feeling that I'll still have a wedding or two, that I'll come out of retirement and I'll come back and shoot some weddings because you know, if the right wedding comes up, I might just do that. And I'm still a photographer that's still a part of my identity. But I know personally for what's on my plate. And the season that I'm in had to let go of something good to make room for something great.

Lesson number five is that your identity needs to get beyond your work and your titles and your job. Now I'm gonna sound like a total Enneagram three here. But this was really tricky for me to separate my worth from the wedding's that I was shooting from everything I had built the name that I had created. And I'm working on this daily, I am working on seeing my worth, as a completely separate thing from anything that I do professionally. If this podcast gets one download, I'm just as worthy and valuable than is then if it's in the top charts. And if your Instagram post gets zero likes, you are just as worthy. Your worth is rooted in who God made you to be and who he sees you as. And it isn't found in any of those things. And so, such an important lesson that I've had to walk through on ultimately, at the end of all of this, the life that I build in the business I build. It needs to make me proud and I have to be able to look back on it and say I really went for it. Like I left it all on the field. I use my gifts I use my talents. I stepped into every opportunity well, and I think that's not an easy calling, but it's such a good, good calling.

Okay, so I want to step in to the questions that I got over on Instagram and make sure that I answer each and every one of these in kind of just like a rapid fire away. Okay, question number one is, how did you bridge the financial gap between weddings to education? Was this a slow shift or, and then it trails off. I think it was slow. I mean, if you look at the timeline of this, I think I really dedicated myself to consistent content to cultivating my audience and then to developing a product that they actually wanted. But the shift of these two things of like bridging the gap between what I was doing as a service based business to what I was doing online, I would say that there definitely became this like tipping point where I was not making as much with education as I was with photography, but it was getting close. And I knew that if I could dedicate more time to education, and I could develop more products serve more accept more coaching clients, right?

Because I was so limited with how many coaching clients I could take on on a one on one basis before, if I get up that capacity, I knew that I was going to be able to replace my wedding income. And that's when it was like a tipping point where I had to make a leap and kind of jump and say, I'm not going to accept any more. Because by saying yes to a wedding, I'm actually saying no to my capacity for education. Because I know that it's a consultation and an engagement session and a wedding day and then recovering from that wedding day, and then editing and then delivering and then an album and that's just one wedding. So I hope that answers your question. Okay, the second question was, was

your brand already personal and like a personal brand? Or did you have to shift it from weddings, I think my brand has always revolved around me, I've always shared pictures of me working pictures behind the scenes, I've really tried to make the process of working with me a part of what my brides were getting. And in the same capacity, I did this in my education, I would say that becoming an educator and creating videos really upped that personal factor. So it was this like, accidental benefit, I guess, of getting on video and really getting bolder in my content that helps people to see me as a human, which is one of the best things that I did for my brand, honestly, overall.

Okay, so the next question from Shay is imposter syndrome. Did you have it? How did you deal with it? Well, the answer is, yeah, I had it, I have it. And it's something I'm constantly dealing with. And honestly, I think if any business owner is not owning up to this imposter syndrome, I would go as far as to say they have it, they just don't even know it. They're not even identifying what's happening. And they're not being honest with themselves because that imposter syndrome is going to rear its ugly head in lots of different ways. And I think starting a YouTube channel, lots of impostor syndrome of Who do I think I am? I don't actually know that much. How am I going to figure out the tech? I'm not smart enough for this? Why would someone buy this that kind of thing? How did I deal with it, I would say that there's there's a lot of journaling work and mindset work that I have done. And replacing these thoughts when they come up when you identify something as imposter syndrome, finding it, labeling it, replacing it and doing that over and over again, is going to be such a valuable practice in your business. It's going to be something that serves you so well. I think I'm going to do a whole episode on impostor syndrome, because there's so much that could be said about this. So let me put a pin in that and come back to it. Okay, last question. How did your social content and online presence change? I think this has changed very slowly over time. And I've always asked myself, What am I what am I hoping to give? What am I hoping to provide value around and always it needs to lead to some sort of product service or sale, right? Because we're business owner.

So at the end of the day, even the personal content that we create should lead people closer to getting to know you trusting you being nurtured through this process towards what it is that you do professionally. So, as a business owner on social media, I'm always thinking of where I'm trying to go. So when it was on the education side, I was trying to answer questions and become a resource and create an authority around all things photography, building a business building a brand scaling that brand in photography, and then I would be able to use it for selling to them through my course. I think another way that my content changed online was I was constantly trying to look at each piece of content as something that could be both evergreen, and look for other ways to make money with that content. So I didn't want my content to only lead to my own products or services like coaching or courses or templates.

I also wanted to be able to partner with companies in an affiliate capacity. And so by doing this, I was able to monetize more of what I was doing. So I could talk to photographers about how I set up my my whole HoneyBook account, which is my CRM, and how I use that to save myself so much time because I essentially had two businesses running at one point where I was serving brides and portrait sessions and doing all the photography stuff, while also maintaining a coaching and education business over on YouTube. And, you know, on on the back end, and I was only able to do this because of HoneyBook. And so when I talked about HoneyBook, I was both positioning myself as an expert for the photographer. But I was also generating more revenue through just an affiliate link and saying, like, Hey, if you want this software and you want to get 50% off your first year, please use my link, I would so appreciate it. That was a way for me to generate some revenue. And so I think that was another way

that my content changed was just how I looked at my content it went from I need to post pictures to show people my portfolio to really critically having a content strategy that would attract people that would give them the right information that would connect them to their next answer, and to really walk them through this process, wherein I might be the answer in the end of the coach they want to work with or the program they want to purchase to build their business and get their business to that next level. So if you've ever thought about pivoting your business, or maybe you have pivoted your business, I'm sure you can relate to a lot of what I said if you have added services or changed your mind or moved in a new direction. I hope this episode helped you. I hope it answered some questions or at least helped you get to know me a little bit better and what I'm doing in my business.

This was really fun to sit down and look at and just see the journey. So thank you so much for joining me here and listening all the way through to the end of today's episode. Thank you. If you're not already inside of the Cultivate Facebook groups, I want to invite you to join I'm going to have that in the show notes of today's episode along with everything that I mentioned here today, and I'm welcoming your questions. I would love to unpack this even further if you're thinking about pivoting. If you have more questions about my pivot, let's talk about it over in the Facebook group.

Thank you so much for listening to the show. If you enjoyed this episode, please help me get the word out about the call to both podcast by taking a screenshot of this episode right now and sharing it on your social media. I would also appreciate it if you would subscribe and leave me a five star review. Thanks again and I'll see you in the next episode.