

Called to Both - Episode 61

Joy Michelle

Did you know that one of the most powerful things that you can do for the longevity and growth in your business is to build a community. That is what today's episode is all about. Maybe you have a community and you want to make it better, more engagement or more connection. Or maybe you are starting your first community from scratch. Today, I'm going to be sharing with you my best tips for growing a community from zero, and what to do when it feels like you're the only one talking in your community. You'll also hear how I recommend picking a focus and direction for your community. This conversation originally took place in my friend Brooke Jefferson's podcast, and I cannot wait for you to hear this conversation today. Don't forget to take a peek at the show notes on your podcast player, I always leave helpful links and resources like related content to this episode. And I even have some personal favorites like my Amazon shop link with just the things that I'm enjoying in my life right now and in my home. Okay, one last announcement before we dive into the interview, is that I am taking on a handful more of one on one coaching clients here in the month of May. If you are creative, small business owner looking for support in your business, specifically in visibility, building your brand authority and building out a marketing strategy. I am your girl just to name a few of the things that I'm working on right now with my coaching clients, both creative small business owners and photographers. Right now I have a client pivoting into education, one building out marketing strategies that do not rely on paid ads and another client refining their offer suite to cater to different stages of their client's needs. So if you'd like to work together or just hear a little bit more about what that would look like, you can reach out via my website, or just shoot me a DM and we can get started. Hello and welcome to the call to both podcast. I'm your host Joe 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 to both. Let's dive in.

Brooke Jefferson

Community is a key piece to making more sales in your business. Today's guest is my friend and fellow photographer, Joy Ella, mon. We are diving into all things community, including how to build one and how a community is closely related to the overall success of your business. After all, we are in the business of relationships, joy, welcome to the show, take a minute, tell us who you are and what you do.

Joy Michelle

Hi, thank you, Brooke, this is so fun. So yes, I am Joy. I am a wife, mom to two toddlers, a believer. And I run the brands photo boss and called to both. So on the photo boss side, I coach and create courses for photographers and on the call to both side. That's my podcast for ambitious women raising littles and running a business. I love, love,

Brooke Jefferson

love that. And I'm just so happy that I found someone who's almost a mirror image of me, I know we talk about this a lot, we have a lot of those similarities, you've got two passions on two different sides. And we are really living out the call to both. And so I just I love your podcast. I love your mission with

that. And I'm just excited to hear how you have used our topic today of community to really help your businesses thrive and see success on one or both sides. Right. So I'm just like, I don't like fluff. I don't like side conversations, really. And so I'm just excited to just dive into this. So I'm just gonna kick us off with Why do you feel building a community is beneficial to your business or businesses in general? Yeah,

Joy Michelle

this is a great question. I think there are so many reasons why I think someone should be strongly considering fostering community around their brand. So I've had a community in in everything that I've done online, especially. And I think this is so so vital. If you have a big goal in your business, it helps to not have to do it alone. And if you have a community, you have a built in engaged audience and at a basic level, I think that's probably the most important reason why community is so important because a business needs an audience because an audience could be leads. And so really making sure to realize that you're building an audience but a really engaged audience in that is key. And so I think a community like if you really break this down is just a group of people with a common goal or a common experience. And we as humans all want to build We need to belong. And so building connection and community around your business is going to build relationships and relationships are what businesses really build on. And so that's what I feel is really amazing about it. And I think it additionally, it's also that, like, entrepreneurship is so lonely, and community combats this so beautifully and builds connection. I don't know if you've experienced this as well, I know you have a huge community, you on both sides of your brand. Really?

Brooke Jefferson

Yeah. So you took the words out of my mouth, because I was thinking as you're talking about this, in lies, if you don't ever want to be the loner, like it's not fun to be that way. Now in seasons alive, sometimes we feel that way. And sometimes it serves a purpose. But overall in business, you can't be a loner with our community. And the reason why you need the community is because like you said earlier, you need people, how are you gonna get sales if you're not even connecting to people, and I have always been a community builder, myself, I enjoy community and a lot of different aspects. Which kind of leads me into the second question that I want to answer. So we can tie the two together. Where do you build community? And I know this is a loaded question for you. It's easy to answer, because you know, where you're focused on building community, but I know there are several different places that people can build community. So walk us through that.

Joy Michelle

I think community can be built anywhere. And I think I have pockets of communities anywhere that I've created a platform or used visibility in any way. But for me, my biggest is my Facebook group. And I think it's where I would recommend most people start because of the format and that it's designed for conversation and connection.

Brooke Jefferson

Same, so exact same. So for me, yes, I build community, and I'm in a multitude of ways and so to use. So just to give examples, especially for me, I build community through this podcast, right, this is a big way to do that. Now, I would say, yes, you're building community through a podcast, however, it does feel a little one sided, which is why I think pairing a podcast or a YouTube channel or whatever it is, with a physical place that people can actually see each other talk to each other is a Facebook group. And so just like you, I also build the majority of my community through that, but just to give, you know, more

examples, you could build community, locally, we see that two people gathering and retreats and workshops and coffee shops and mom groups and things like that you can build community through your email marketing, Instagram, DMS, like we're both nodding our heads because we do all of these things. And I just want to I want to pair those two questions of why and where to build community because I want you to know that your options are limitless. And I also think that community really is essential. Like, it just is at the end of the day. Now, this wasn't a question. I prepared you for it. But I am curious, have you ever in your process of entrepreneurship, ever built a community that didn't work out? Or you changed your mind about?

Joy Michelle

Ah, I'm sure that I've had things that I've put out into the world that didn't bring back the same energy that I was hoping they would I don't think I've had like a formal community that I've since shelf? No, actually, you know what called to both. Before it had that name. I had a Facebook community. I can't remember what it was called. But it was almost like I was workshopping called to both before called to both became the podcast and the Facebook community. So now Yeah, I think I did for a little while, like, was kind of unclear on the vision, which I think we'll come back to. But it was it was kind of I was just putting out feelers and then I eventually kind of just let that fizzle out. I think I ended up just taking that group and potentially renaming it when I brought in like a full fledged vision for color both. Yes. So

Brooke Jefferson

I bring that up to say, like I can, I can, in the back of my mind, think of two or three different communities or businesses I thought I was going to do, but I didn't. And so like the Facebook groups just kind of fizzled out. But I say all of that to say, and to encourage people, even if you're like, Oh, I tried that, and it didn't work, I want you to like, I want you to be re inspired and see, okay, well, actually, maybe I can do this. And I know we're gonna walk through some tips here in just a minute. And I would really, really encourage you guys to write these down and implement implement every single one because this truly is how we've built community. And I also just want to preface building a community is not overnight, as is basically nothing good that comes in your business. And so just know, it may take you longer than 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, but you have to be fully committed and I'm telling you, it's worth it. Right. It's totally worth it. Start from ground zero with zero people in your group and then build on it day after day.

Joy Michelle

Yeah, and there's nothing more intimidating than starting something from nothing and And I was reading this quote last night, and it was saying anything worth doing is worth doing poorly. And that was hard for me because I want to do things really, really well. I want to do things with a lot of excellence. But I have to remind myself if it's new, I'm not going to be excellent. So there's gonna be those humble beginnings, but it's absolutely worth it. And my groups have never grown very quickly, not at least not at the beginning. It's been very, like average, painstaking work showing up consistently. So there is no overnight success moment. But at the same time, as both of us have 10s of 1000s of people in our communities now. And I think that just shows that really, anybody can do this. I don't think I did anything special. I do think I did something strategic, but nothing that cannot be replicated.

Brooke Jefferson

Yeah. So now that we've gotten rid of the pressure, right, there's pressure here, and you see the importance, and you're like, I know I need community. All right. So joy, what are your tips for someone wanting to begin or maybe improve building their community? Yeah. So I would say

Joy Michelle

first and foremost, number one is to have a clear focus or solution for your community. So when you know the focus of that group, I'm just going to call it a group. And then you are able to attract the right people to join. So in my own group, I knew I wanted to solve problems that photographers had in their businesses that were wanting to grow, and the types of clients they wanted to attract, I knew I wasn't going to talk to anybody else, I was only going to talk to wedding and portrait photographers. And by making that solution, I gave a really clear reason for someone to join. So sometimes I think that we try to be for everyone. And we dilute and watered down so much of our message to the point where somebody it's so forgettable, it looks pretty, maybe it has a nice cover, they think you're great, but they're just going to forget that group even exist, they're not going to think, oh, I need to go back to that group and ask a question. And it doesn't become the place where people talk, which I think is what can be really frustrating when you're starting a Facebook group or any kind of community is that in the beginning, it feels like you're the only one talking right. So to get to that next level, I think having a very clear focus. And solution is just key. I also think that the next thing you need is to give people a reason to stay. So once they've joined, you have to give them a reason to stay so that it's worth their time. And I think the best way to do this is to create content that is valuable. And I don't think this always has to be elaborate or an entire new pillar as if you have to create blog posts, but it's formatted into a Facebook group. I think that this simply comes down to making sure that there's things happening in the group that are not happening anywhere else, making it exclusive, just like we would for an email list just like we would for anything else, you have to give people a reason to subscribe or join or opt in. But you also need to reward that with a community sense, and exclusivity and content that's happening only in that group. Because then they stay. And that's when the real magic happens. But I think that the next thing that's key, and really, it's like I fought which goes first, it's like you need all of this. But the next thing is you have to cast a vision and lead that community. So I think of casting a vision as like sharing where you want this to go, where are you going? What is the group culture going to be? Because you set the tone, and you are going to determine what goes what flies and what doesn't in your community. And I think that sometimes in the excitement of starting a community, people can feel that excitement and that energy and they want to be around it. But then as the leader, you stop showing up, you get inconsistent, you maybe lose that vision a little bit, they're not going to have the vision if you don't have the vision. So this is huge. And I've seen groups kind of fizzle because the leader fizzled.

Brooke Jefferson

So true, and I am seeing that too. So okay, I love these three tips. And we're just gonna, we're just gonna go back and hit each one. So number one you really talked about, like having that focus. And for me, this is the who, and the what, and I always ask these questions, and it really is tied back to your business. So whatever your business is, you really need to think about who is my niche? Who is my ideal client? Who is it that I'm trying to reach? Because one of the things that I've taught in the past and I'm we're using photography examples, because that's where a lot of our experience is. So just take it or leave it whatever you want. But, you know, I at one point, had a Facebook group, a community for people that were both my clients and people who wanted to potentially book me in the future. And that worked for a little while it did and I think it depends on you know, What you're talking about it, it goes back to that content, you know. And so I think instead of being basic like that, and going deeper, so getting past the surface level getting past just talking about photography all the time, it's what transformation are you trying to give them? Or where are you trying to take them? Right? And so I was just talking about this on a coaching call yesterday with one of my clients, and we were talking about this, too, she wants to start a Facebook group. Amazing. So we had to go right roots deep.

Joy Michelle

What like, Who

Brooke Jefferson

are you talking to? Who's your ideal person? And what are they like? And that way, we're not bringing in all these people, right? That have nothing to do with what we're doing? And I know, that's a crucial piece for you, too. So do you have any tips for people? I'm just number one, how to actually choose a focus that goes beyond just being like basic or too broad, right, too? General?

Joy Michelle

I think a question that can sometimes draw that out is to ask, What do you want people to get from the group? Or how do you want them to leave your group? What in what way? Are they better? Or in what way? Are they more connected? And that can really draw out more answers? Because once you know that, just like you're saying, you know, what kind of content you need to produce in the group as well. So I think this also makes maintaining a community less intimidating, because you know, the transformation, you know, what you're trying to achieve, and what you're trying to share, right. And it's important here not to get stuck in the tutorial trap. I know that a lot of times as educators or coaches or creators of some kind online, we can end up doing a lot of like how to content right, like raising my hand here, because that is what I built my business on. But what's really important to remember is that how to content might get you a view might get them piqued of their attention a little bit. But you have to change their perspective or give a transformation or challenge a belief or a thought in order to get someone's respect. So making sure that you're mixing in a little bit of okay, yes, you might be teaching somebody how to break past a limiting belief about money. But like, really breaking that down a little bit more into okay, what mindset? Are you changing instead of a how to become more wealthy? What mindset are we changing here. And I think that that is also really helpful, too.

Brooke Jefferson

So you said a word that I think is the best way to really create your content. And that was connection, that really is, what you're doing, or what you're fostering. And the whole point of your group, it really does come back to connection because it goes back to the word community, what are we looking for, we're looking for connection. So another great way, and this kind of just came flooding back to my memory is to really put yourself into a hostess or host position, okay, this is your home, right? This is or your venue, you rent it out, you're the person in charge of your group, your community, and your job is not necessarily to run the whole show. But it's to serve people and bring, you know, get people to meet one another. And so when you can think about it like that, when I sit down to create content, I'm like, Okay, how can I create connection, and also show up as an authority figure also, and I don't think that you necessarily have to do that, depending on what you are, right? So if you're a coach, then you're probably going to show up as an authority. But if you're a photographer, and you're just trying to build community to maybe bring mothers, you know, you're really passionate about postpartum moms, then maybe you're after a different transformation, right? Your transformation, those women to not feel like they're all alone. So when I sit down, you know, for content, when you sit down for content, really think through how can I foster connection. And that's really where those engagement questions come in. And all these things that you guys see online that they're like, You need to post these questions. So I think really, your goal at the end of the day is connection in your group, which really takes us through the focus and their reason to stay. Well. Their reason to stay if they're feeling connected, is to find that community at a basic level. You can always add more reasons on here.

Joy Michelle

Hey there friend, I want to share the software that I've been using longer than anything else in my business. And that is honey book. Honey book is a client management software and it's how I send contracts get paid and how I keep track of client inquiries and where we are in a given project. Before I tried out honey book, I was using my email inbox to track where I was at with clients. And honestly, things were falling through the cracks. I had no streamlined way of following up with my clients or inquiries and knowing where a given project was at. Now, inside of HoneyBook, I can see at a glance exactly what is happening with my projects, because they're all displayed in a timeline. HoneyBook allows me to send questionnaires, invoices, see easy to understand detailed financial reports, set up my meetings and appointments through their built in scheduler tool. And seriously, so much more. Honey book truly is an all in one software. And listen, as a busy mom running a business, I get it, you need a powerful tool that can handle everything, not just the basics. I even use this to book guests on my show here on the podcast because of how easy it is to schedule my guests and use their workflow automations try honey book out for free at joy.michelle.co/honeybook and get 35% off your first year. Honey book was designed specifically for creatives like you. So give it a try today by visiting Joy.michelle.co/honeybook.

Brooke Jefferson

I'm curious though joy, what is one thing you do? What's one reason to say that you give people that are in one of your communities? We're just what's your exclusive content? I just out of curiosity, because I love learning from other people.

Joy Michelle

Yeah, so one thing that I do that has actually helped me push past some of my fears of showing up online is that I do live content inside of photo boss. And so I'll go live, I'll also allow my community to be a part of the creation of things. So right now we're doing a huge survey. And I'm doing a big giveaway at the end of the survey. But I really want to hear what my photo bosses have to say about the topics of pricing, I want to know what they're experiencing. And like, they're quite literally influencing what is coming out next in the product suite, you know, in the next few months, which I think is a really cool way to like not just say you're my community, but actually say I'm going to hear you and create products around you. And so yeah, early release for things, sometimes live content. And then we do like guest expert trainings and things like that. So yeah, there's there's a lot that happens. It's not something that I say, oh, it has to happen every single week. But I think as you build a vision for a community, you start to become excited to show up and give to them. And then like you said, there's also conversation prompts and things like that. Just opportunities to really highlight the members as well, because I think, just like you were saying it's not about the leader, like the leader is an essential component. But this is really not the joy show. This is photo boss, like photo boss isn't me photo boss is a collective, it's over 10,000 photographers from around the world. And so really giving them space to share their work and their struggles and even their victories, I think is a reason to stay.

Brooke Jefferson

For sure, absolutely. And just some other things, too, that I was just thinking of just depending on the business owner is really thinking again, once you know your who what your mission and your vision is, I think creating content, like you said, I was trying to figure out which one of these tips goes first because really, they're all equal. They're all. But some of the other things that you could do like an example for us in the photography group, like we do exclusive contests, you're not going to see me do that on

Instagram, you're not going to hear me do that on the podcast, like that's just for the Facebook group. And it's an opportunity for photographers to show off their work. Because what do we want? At the end of the day, we want that affirmation, right, we want to show off what we work so hard to do. And then for some other things, too, is once you know that person, once you know like your type of business, I think it's going to be a lot easier for you to think, How can I help these people? How can I serve these people? So maybe you're a guest expert, you know, you can bring in guest experts, maybe that looks differently. Maybe you're hosting a book study or a Bible study or something like that. So anything that fosters that connection, and your community I think is great. And we don't need to overthink this, you know. And I also, I will also say when you were thinking about building your community, I really want you guys to just embrace quality over quantity, because I'm going to tell you now that the group is so big now that there are 10,000 people, it is harder to navigate and speak to the people because it has grown so big. And I would I would love to go back to just 5000 fully dedicated active members then have 10,000. So it's not about the numbers in your community. It's about the quality. There's no point in having 10,000 if only 2000 are paying attention. So I just want to throw that out there as well.

Joy Michelle

Yeah, and the cool thing is like Facebook gives you these back end metrics of how many people are actually engaging. And of course, if your Facebook group is one number, the actual amount of people showing up daily, weekly, monthly is going to look like very, very different. So always keep that in mind. It's kind of one of those like we know that people on Instagram You know that their followers might not all be there or all be real. So it's one of those vanity metrics that just that one big brown number isn't true to how many people are actually showing up and engaging. So it is all about the quality. For sure.

Brooke Jefferson

Okay, so I'm pretty sure at this point, we've convinced them to build a community. So one of the things that I love to do is really get a look at okay, well, how has building this community specifically helped you achieve your goals or sell your programs?

Joy Michelle

Yeah, I think for me, it was knowing what people wanted from me. Because if you know what people want from you, they will actually buy that thing from you. So leading to sales is the most obvious answer here. And I think, really granularly though, I was asking questions upon entry to the group, so the group is private, but not hidden. So I make sure that the group is not something that people can see everything and benefit from without actually joining. I think there's such a significance to joining something. And I take a couple of questions when someone comes in. And so I would ask simple questions like, what's one thing you wish you could fix right now in your photography, business? Or what are you hoping to gain from this community, and I got some really good information. It was like free market research, telling me exactly what problems these photographers were struggling with. And I could also get a feel for where they were at in their business if they needed something more introductory if they needed something higher level. So if you're listening, and you're thinking, I just don't even know like I want to make something that's actually going to sell a community can be another way to get a much closer pulse on your audience and a community member is probably some of your warmest leads. So those are people's opinions, who you actually would want to weigh versus just a random poll on Instagram that anybody could be voting on. That's not actually your ideal client. So knowing what my people wanted, that was huge. Knowing what language they were using, this is so important for sales pages for copy for making sure that like the modules in your course are speaking to what they said their problem was. So we can know that our ideal person wants more clients, or we can

know that they're struggling to make money. That's like a big broad problem. But what did they say was the problem? What were their words. And so that was really, really helpful. For me, that's continues to be really, really helpful for me. Another way that community has helped my business is to grow my email list, which I don't know about you. But I wasn't like the first thing I thought about as a photographer. And so I was a little late to the game on the email list front. But I was able to really help harness and stay in touch with people and make them feel like they were coming along with me, as my business has pivoted and turned and all kinds of things, I think it really helps cut through that noise, because an email address is still just and will continue to be so valuable, that I talked about, like helping me to be able to go live, because the thought of going live on YouTube or somewhere that was just like, so public was a little intimidating. But I could show up and give amazing value and like create these live videos, and kind of hit two birds with one stone and get better at presenting and speaking and, and showing up. So it has really, really helped me grow. But I would say like knowing what they want growing my email list, the language stuff, and just ultimately, being able to have a ready group of people to launch to was huge. I launched my first beta program, the program was essentially built on everything the group told me. And then I launched to the group and had my first round of beta students all paid. And so I don't I mean, I don't know how that would have been, I feel like it would have been very intimidating to launch something to just like Instagram and hope for the best. So that really gave me more confidence as an online like course creator.

Brooke Jefferson

Yeah, I just want a second everything that you said, because I was like, Yep, yeah, yeah, I would have I would have said all of those things. And my favorite is the market research, just being able to ask them questions and get their feedback, because I'll be honest, sometimes I think I know the answer. And I am very wrong. And we're like, and then me and my team on the back end. We're like, wait a second, wait, what you know, and so then we're just kind of surprised by it. But my community I also I had that community. I think we started the current community that I have March or April 2020 during the whole pandemic shutdown. I really wanted to get back to photographers during that time. And so we had that community and then I don't think I mean, I sold like shop templates, so like small things, but I didn't have like an actual program until about fall. And I was able to completely like hit my launch number get ever Buddy that I wanted to in the program, and they were like it was the best is what fueled my business today and fueled that program. And I'm still in contact with almost every single one of those people that went through it. So I love community, it really does help you achieve your goals. And it really does help with your sales. Now all this to say, I hope that you hear our hearts in this, we really are for community, we really are for people, we didn't build a community just to make sales. So I just want to make that very, very clear. And I know everyone here you have the right hearts that you have the right mindset. But I just wanted to give that little caveat to you don't just go build this community to basically just try to make as many sales as you want. You, you have to want the community and like you said earlier, if the leader of the group starts getting inconsistent, and I don't say that to put pressure on anybody, there are 1000 ways to be a whole nother episode of how we actually run our communities and maintain our communities and all those things, but definitely be dedicated to it. Don't let this be like, Oh, I heard this podcast, I'm pumped up, I'm ready. I'm gonna go start this thing. And four weeks later, I'm just going to forget all about it. Don't do that. Because then it's going to be that much harder to try to get the momentum going again. So joy, these this was gold. All of this was such great tips. And it's almost like it's almost like a mini workshop. It really is just no, we covered. We covered it all. Do you have anything else that you want to add? Before we close out this conversation?

Joy Michelle

Yeah, I think your point of you know, this isn't just about sales. I'll also say there are faster ways to make sales. It's, it's a long game. But I actually think the slow burn is the win. Because no matter where your business goes, if you have bought in relationships, people that truly want to see you succeed, because of the community you've built. It transcends the product. And that is what we all want. We all want to be able to shift or change or take a break or come back because we have actual loyal fans and followers and people that like love us. So I think that's that's such a good point, I think the last thing I would say is that if you have a big goal, a big ambitious goal in your business, you don't want to do it alone. You don't and you don't have to. And I think the amazing thing is that people do want to see you creating and achieving and iterating and not just the piece of paper or the metal at the end. And so to be able to bring your community in to what you're creating and allow them to co create actually makes it so that they can be your cheerleaders and that you're not alone at the same time. So it's not just about a community that you are separate from, you're in it and so you get to also benefit from it. So yeah, huge fan of community.

Brooke Jefferson

So, so good. Okay, where can people connect with you find you all the things? Yeah. So

Joy Michelle

I'm at joy, Michelle on Instagram, Joy michelle.co, CEO for my website, and my podcast is called to both.

Brooke Jefferson

Yes, you guys go listen to her podcast. It's so good. And I also get to be on your podcast too. Just fine. I love it. Yeah, it's great. Okay, this was so good. Get out there. Go build your community. Stay consistent with it. And you guys can DM us anytime. If you have a follow up question. You know this. So we're excited and we can't wait to see how many communities are fostered after this conversation. Thank you so much joy.

Joy Michelle

Thank you. 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 podcasts 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.