

Called To Both 91

Welcome back to the call to both podcast, I'm so excited that you hit play on this episode. Since we're here at the end of the year, I thought it would be cool to do a year end review of sorts in this episode sharing some of the UPS some of the downs and in betweens of scaling a business while having small children. So much can happen in one year. And it's it always blows me away even as a 10 plus year entrepreneur, it always blows me away how different the year ends up looking compared to what I had planned for what I had set goals for and not always in a good way or a bad way. It's just 12 months is a good amount of time.

And a lot of shifts and turns can happen in that time. And this was one of those years where I really feel like the way that my year started out is so different than how my year finished. So I want to share some of the challenges that I faced this year, along with some lessons that I learned, and then some of the highlights of this past year of 2023. And then what I will be taking with me into 2024, what will the differences be? And how will my mindset be different as I move into this next year? Hello, and welcome to the call to both podcast, I'm your host, join 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.

Okay, so first, I want to share some of the challenges that took place behind the scenes that, you know, I feel like a lot of entrepreneurs don't really share this stuff. Like maybe we at like a high level might talk about little bits and pieces of what's happening. But I think it can kind of be fun and interesting to hear what other entrepreneurs faced even similar, like the hardships that they faced, because it just makes me feel less alone when things are hard in my business. So I have a few challenges I want to share with you and definitely not to be negative, but just to be real. And then also to hopefully give you some insight and some lessons in like things I did wrong or things that I would do differently, that you don't necessarily have to go make those same mistakes as I did.

Okay, so really backing up into the very beginning of this year, my team, this is one of the things that looks so different now here at the end of the year is my team. And this was a really hard thing as it was happening. But essentially, when I started out the year, I feel like we were kind of locked and loaded all these great positions were filled in my team, all contractors, by the way, my team is all contractors. And I was thinking that this was going to be like a huge scaling year in terms of my team. So I was looking to fill more positions. I had some team members that had been with me for a couple of years that I was so excited to like give them more and more responsibility and projects. But in those first few months of the year, I'm working with a coach, I have this team, I'm thinking things are going to start scaling. And two of my core team members actually ended up leaving for totally different reasons after being with me for years and being mid project.

And this was super challenging, both personally and professionally because I thought the year was going to look really different. But essentially, one of those team members was going through like a family crisis and needed to like pull away from their VA business, which you know, and I totally get and we still talk like all the time we're actually friends, I actually I can I can say right now I'm we're on great

terms, both of these team members and I are on good terms. But professionally speaking, it was it was a tricky time, because one of them I hired through an agency. And because we originally work together through an agency, there was no possible legal way for us to work together. When that VA decided to leave the agency, they had to leave working with me.

And this was so hard because I didn't know that hiring this VA through an agency that we would not legally be allowed to work together for two years. It's very commonplace for there to be like these types of agreements in the contract. But I read my side of the contract very closely. And this was never shared with me by the agency. This was actually something only the VA knew about and that they signed. And I don't think there was like anything specifically shady going on. But I really wish I would have known that going into this pouring so much time and onboarding effort into that specific team member, that if they decided to leave the agency, we wouldn't legally be able to work together even though they wanted to continue working with me privately.

So I personally don't hire through agencies anymore. I don't know if I ever will again probably not because of this space. cific thing, what I want to do here at join Michelle CO is find really great talent, build them into the company into the culture and keep them I don't want them to be in and out and feel like if they ever leave that agency that they also have to leave me. And because of that, after this point, I decided to hire someone not through an agency who had never been a VA before. And it's actually gone really well for me in my business. And I have a future episode coming up on what it has looked like to hire for different roles onboarding, where I'm finding different team members and how that has looked. So stay tuned in the next couple of weeks here for that, but that was a really a challenging point, because I for for a couple months there things were so stripped back in terms of what team help I had, because it's kind of happened all at once that I was really floundering trying to figure out okay, what what is this next year going to look like? And what positions should I hire for because essentially, I got to kind of start over in some of these core roles that team members had been playing for me. So that was a little bit of a challenge. And that was the first challenge I thought of when I was thinking about this episode.

The next challenge is so interesting, because it came right on the heels of me having this big shake up with my team. And that was that I was going to not have childcare for one month during the summer. So our nanny was going to be traveling back to visit her family in Brazil. And because of that we weren't going to have childcare. But this was happening at the exact same time as my team struggles. So I actually decided to take a step away from my business entirely and take a sabbatical. And I have an episode all about this. I'll link it in the show notes, I did a full recap of like how I made money on my sabbatical what this looked like how I got ready for it and all the things. But it ended up being really good for me and my business and the timing, while at the time it felt really bad to be like, in the middle of this year that I'm scaling, I'm losing team members, my man is about to go away for a month. It was such a time of just pausing. And I am not a person that pauses very often. I'm a little bit Go, go go. And if I'm pausing, I'm strategizing.

And I'm planning and I'm, you know, thinking ahead and trying to get my ducks in a row, I'm not pausing with, you know, my toes in the sand and like just taking deep breaths at the beach. And so I really purposed to take that month and just be with my kids and have a summer where I'm not trying to do it all, I'm just trying to enjoy the summer with them. So that was really cool. And you can hear the full episode recap for my sabbatical. I'll have that linked in the show notes. But because of taking that time away in my business, I do feel like I returned with a renewed sense of purpose. After this point, I was

able to put my team back together in a you know, in a way and start to rebuild. And truly I can say now on the other side of it here in December, that it was meant to be that way that my team is moving in a direction that I like I didn't know it needed to go, but it is going in a great direction now.

And I think that's like just so true of entrepreneurship, that there's so many things that are happening outside of our power. But a lot of times it still works to our betterment because we're able to learn and grow and adjust and get better every time we onboard someone new or every time we make a business, you know, investment that doesn't quite work out, you're still able to take away the lessons and the insights of that thing, even when it goes wrong. Hey, they're creative. I'm jumping into this episode with a quick message for you. If you've ever dreamed of being a guest on podcast, collaborating with influencers, or maybe you want to speak at an upcoming summit or conference, but you're just not sure how to actually make that happen. I want to tell you, it actually starts with the perfect pitch. And that is exactly what pitch power email templates provide a foolproof way to go after the thing that you want. Not only will you get access to 11 pre written email templates ready to go to plug and play in pitch, but you will also get a masterclass training, where I share the five crucial elements of effective pitching. Head over to Joe michelle.co/pitch power to grab your templates. Now, take the guesswork out of pitching and join me inside pitch power templates today.

So I have a couple of other things here that were challenging throughout the year. One was, oh my gosh is brand deal negotiations. I feel like I navigated a lot of new brand deal negotiations learned that I need to kind of start to get paid up front. I had a brand deal negotiation that I never got paid for. Which was kind of interesting. I've talked about that here on the podcast before when I talked about I think I had a diversifying your revenue series of episodes here on the show. And in those I talked about brand deals pretty extensively. So I'll have that linked in the show notes. If any of you are interested in sponsorships brand deals more influencing type work, I have started to do more of that. And I actually have some pitching templates on this as well.

So my pitch pitch power templates help you to turn those, you know, here's some free product into an actual paid brand deal through some templates and negotiations. So I learned to get paid up front, I learned, you know, what are my process is going to be how am I going to charge for these things. And ultimately, I just, I feel like I was the guinea pig for so much of what I'm now helping my clients do and my students do in their businesses as well. And one other struggle that really comes to mind throughout this year was the copyright infringement on photo boss, I did a whole episode about this, I won't get into all of it. But at the time, that was that was really upsetting. And it was hard. And I didn't know how it was going to end. But ultimately, it actually was such a good thing. It was a nudge for me to move forward with getting this show the call to both podcast and just call to both that phrase, getting that trademark underway. Because trademarks take so long and are costly. I was kind of delaying that and feeling like that wasn't necessarily like a top priority for me in my business. And then when I did have that infringement on photo boss, which is my existing trademark, I was like, okay, for sure, we've got to do this, like for sure. So that was one like challenge that was like an immediate lesson in protecting your intellectual property. And just making sure that if you're pouring your your heart into something in your business, that you're protecting it legally as well.

Okay, so let's talk about like some highs, like some good things that happened this past year. And then I'll kind of get into some of the key takeaways, and just thoughts that I'm taking into the next year. So one of the highs was actually my sabbatical taking a month off of my business. And like for so many reasons, but I think the first one was just my initial doubt that I could even do that and still make money

and still have momentum this year, while taking that time off, was for me, it was really hard for me to get over mentally. And I think it was a really powerful teaching opportunity for me to see how unnecessary I am sometimes in my own business that, you know, I've really have built something that can run in part without me, not forever, but for a period of time, like a month that that is still true. And that was such a cool like reality and a little bit of a testament to what I've started to lay down as a foundation and build in my business that I think so many creative service providers are craving.

And so it was like, kind of putting my money where my mouth is and having to actually live it out. actually taking a month off and not having any work hours, not even necessarily like during naptime and during bedtime, like just truly being on sabbatical, such a highlight. And now it's crazy to say, but like, I think that's something I'm gonna start doing more regularly. So that was really cool. Another highlight was that I at the beginning of the year in January, I attended the Elevate conference in Nashville, and I was able to actually meet my best friend Kayla Brent, who has been on this podcast, I'll link back to her episode if you want to hear her interview. And that was just so cool.

So being able to actually meet her in real life was awesome. And then later in the year actually got to go to her house and spend a week at her house and just kind of do like a work brainstorming like retreat with her so restorative and so needed and that was like just such a treat that in previous years, I feel like when my kids were like baby babies, that would have been so hard. So I'm in this like, beautiful window of time where the kids are still young, but they're not quite as needy as like a baby, where I can do more traveling and go to conferences and just learn from other creatives. And that was so fun and so cool. A couple of other highlights for me in the business, we're adding some new offers for creatives specifically.

So I have visibility coaching as an offer now in my business, which I have been loving, and the pitch power email templates, which is all about helping you get visibility in your business, regardless of the platform. So there's templates on getting yourself on podcasts, getting into people's Facebook groups and Masterminds, speaking, collaborating giveaway templates, all the things that you could possibly need to pitch someone for are included in pitch power templates, which is so overdue because I've been asked about these types of things so many times and it feels really good to finally have a product a low cost afford Trouble product to be like, Here you go. This is all of my, like experience and pitching brainpower all consolidated into a template. And it comes with a masterclass on essentials to pitching and things that you need to do like your homework and how to get that pitch to be so juicy, that you're so much more likely to get it. Yes. Another program that I created and ran for the first time this year that I'm so proud of, is the photo boss method. And that's a group coaching program for wedding and portrait photographers ready to scale and go full time.

So this was a really incredible cohort, especially the first time that I ran it, it was just so incredible, the results were unbelievable. And I will say this is the first time I'm announcing this but I have a waitlist, I'm going to link that down in the show notes. Because a revamp to this program is coming. So if you're a photographer, specifically wedding and portrait, you're going to want to be on this waitlist, this is coming in just the next couple of months here. And the waitlist will get first access when I open doors, and we'll get a bonus and the lowest price for 24 hours.

So if you're a photographer, definitely get on that waitlist. Okay, the last high of this year that I have written down is hiring VAs back onto my team after my team kind of dwindled down at the beginning of the year. And then kind of getting my like getting wind back in my sails again, I feel like is really like the

best way to put it because that's how it felt. And then of course, I mean, there's tons of like personal life, moments of highs and lows. But now here in December, I feel like this is such an interesting time because at the start of this year, I don't think we really knew for sure that we were going to be moving, we had been hopeful that this would be the year that we could really pull the trigger and get moving on moving. But now of course I'm my office as I'm looking around in here as I'm recording is like halfway packed up, like most of my stuff is off the walls. And it's like very bare bones in here because I am moving at the end of the month.

So I would definitely list that among some of the highs. For me personally, it was just like the moment that my husband got his job outside Tampa, the moment that we figured out we were going to be, you know, putting an offer on a house in Florida and like things like that. It's just been almost like a quiet year until the very end. And then it's been like this frenzy of so many exciting moments for us in our family. Okay, so moving into thoughts and takeaways, I'm sure I could continue sharing struggles and highs and lows all day long. But I think ultimately, what I want to have you thinking about even as you're reflecting on your business, is the takeaways, what are the lessons? What are the things that you'll bring with you so that you don't repeat the same stuff over and over. And I know for me, when I look back on this year, it has been a year of just most like stripping away all that is unnecessary, getting brutally honest with myself, about what things are truly moving the needle, what team member activities are necessary. And I think like just taking time away from my business has forced me to realize that a lot of it is unnecessary, right?

Like if you take a month away from your business, and you're still able to make money, you realize how much of the time you spend sitting at your desk or out working is maybe not even completely necessary for what it is that you do. You know, there's this saying that I've heard that says What Got You Here Won't Get You There. And I feel that right now in my business, I feel like what got me to this point in my business today, sitting here, December 2023 is not the same activities that are going to be necessary for me to get to the next level to get to that next point of impact for my business, a year from today, a cool exercise to almost like flex this muscle of like what is unnecessary? What can we take away would be to think about if your working hours right now in your business were cut in half tomorrow, which is totally happened to me. You need to be asking yourself, like what is one to two things every day that still need to get done? Or what is something that I need to do in my business that would absolutely have to get done.

Even if I was only working half the hours I am now because odds are whatever things you're thinking about, those are probably money producing tasks. Those are things that are actually generating revenue for you that you know, instinctively, if you had less hours than ever, like if you only had five hours to work in your business, you still know that those need to get done, then the question becomes Okay, does it actually have to get done by you? And that's where the team comes in. And that's the next level of entrepreneurship. Right. But I still think it's such an important exercise to Look at everything that you're doing in your business, look at all the money that you're spending. And this is a perfect time of year to take that time to reflect and do an 8020 analysis of where your money is coming from. Where's your time going? Where are you investing your time and your money? And are you seeing the return that you want to be seeing great time to make adjustments.

As you're moving into the new year, there's just nothing quite like being able to turn that calendar page that can really help motivate you to make some changes, change your pricing, change your boundaries, change your goals, it's a very inspiring time of year. So I say, why not take that and leverage that, of

course, don't wait for a new year to make new goals. But if you're sitting here listening to this in real time, let the excitement and just that fresh start feeling be that extra motivation for you. Something that I've cultivated a lot in myself this year that I know I'm going to be taking for sure into next year, is really thinking about and pouring into like my own personal giftings and talents. I believe that everybody has unique talents and giftings. And that sometimes we're the worst at identifying this in ourselves, because they just come naturally to us. It's something that we do that we would do, whether we were paid for it or not. But if you can identify that and draw that out, and incorporate that into your work in some way, that becomes something that people can't replicate. It's such a differentiating factor for you. And I think that will help your brand and your offers and your business to stand out and not be easily blending into what everyone else is doing that it's so important to continue to cultivate that. Another thing that I will and won't be doing so I have a little list of like do's and don'ts for 2024.

One of my don'ts is that I will no longer be accepting free products for content creation. Now like of course, if I get offered like my dream car, or a dream vacation or an iMac computer, yeah, sure, I'll create you a video. But in general, I'm talking like more like that free product for Content Exchange, I'm just not available for it anymore. I feel like I've paid my dues. And that's an automatic No. So my team knows if we get one of those, we're going to send them our response template for how we can turn that into a paid Partnership deal, which we have successfully done a couple of times already. And I just want to encourage you if you're getting pitches every once in a while for, you know, hey, can we send you this thing for free and you talk about it, that is an open door to potentially become a paid collaboration. Alright, another thing that I will be doing more of in 2024. For Gosh, what are we going to do 2024 Is journaling specifically morning pages, journaling, and that's three pages long hand stream of consciousness journaling, look it up. Oh my gosh, if you haven't read the artists way, I strongly recommend it, it should be the next book that you read. A couple of things I'm going to be revisiting this time of year is my base rates for my services like coaching, all of my policies and boundaries and communications that's going on with my clients making sure that that's exactly where I want it to be that it feels good that it's still in alignment with the season of life that I'm in.

So I want to encourage you right now to be thinking about how you're communicating with your clients. Are you happy with the boundaries that you've set in place, this is a fantastic time to potentially change your automatic inbox responder or not text with your clients, if you don't want to be texting with your clients and get them to a platform that you do feel comfortable corresponding with them, put them into Slack, get them on to email, put them wherever you feel comfortable having that kind of communication, this is a great time to say, hey, going forward in 2024, we're going to have a little policy change. And you can now communicate with me here. I had a boundaries episode series here on called to both and that was boundaries, from your business between you and your business and boundaries with your clients to juicy episodes. If you feel like this is speaking to you right now. And you could really use some help in the area of boundaries, I will have those linked in the show notes as well. So I want you to set some non negotiables for yourself going into next year.

I think what your baseline standards are going to be as far as your packages, how many clients you'll book, how many weekends you'll be working, if any, and deciding now about what those boundaries are going to be what are those non negotiables going to be? And then who is going to keep you accountable? How are you going to build accountability around these new non negotiables that you have for yourself? As you've reflected on the past year, you've got to take the good leave the bad and in order to maintain that commitment to yourself. I strongly recommend that you build accountability for yourself in your business. One other thing I'm going to be changing for my myself is that I am giving

myself a raise in 2024. So I follow the profit first model the book profit first. And I have not adjusted my salary in quite some time. Actually, recently, Felipe mentioned this to me, and said that we should raise it because of inflation. And I also feel like I should just be paying myself.

So that is definitely happening for me, which is having me revisit all the numbers and my costs and my prices and my marketing to be able to back up that higher salary for myself. So you might be in a similar position. And I think this is a great time to revisit your numbers, potentially talk to an accountant or CPA, and really get a good grip on your finances for this year upcoming. Before we wrap up today's episode, I wanted to say if you are looking for ways to market your business in the upcoming year, and you're interested in sponsoring the call to both podcasts, please reach out to me, I would absolutely love to chat. I'm interested in working with more creative service based providers, software companies, digital companies, all of that. But the small businesses are where my heart is at. And I would love to feature more of your businesses in the ads for this podcast. So if you reach out to me, it's podcast at Joy michelle.co. And I can send you some rates and some information about getting started. Okay, so this has been the highs and lows of 2023.

Thanks so much for hanging out with me here. I hope that you have a minute to do this in your own business and just sit and reflect. And if you want to share some of your highs and lows with me, please do so you can do that in the call to both community over on Facebook. I also think this would be kind of a fun thing for us to do together, you can see other people's highs and lows in the community. So I'll start a community thread there. And I would love it if you would share some of your best moments or challenging moments or lessons learned from this past year. So go ahead and join us in the code to both Facebook community. I'll have that in the show notes. And I'll see you over there. 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.