

Welcome back to the Called to Both podcast. I am so glad that you're joining me here for this episode. I think you picked a really good one because today I'm gonna be sharing a story from a recent client that I worked with where after over a decade in her business, after experiencing a lot of success even in her business, her marketing really just stopped working, stopped converting, and she had gone into a dry season.

And it... If you've ever been in a position like this for any amount of time, you know how frustrating and confusing it can be to have so many years of experience in your business and really have, like, earned your stripes as a talented service provider with happy clients that have loved working with you in the past, and yet still be sitting there kind of spinning your wheels and wondering, like, "What is going on?"

W- what is going wrong, and what do I need to do to fix this?" And that is exactly where my client, Amanda, was at when she came to me when we first started working together. I mean, she literally said, "I'm spinning my wheels. I am working constantly, and I am not booking a single client. I need you to come in and audit what's going on in my business, get some fresh eyes on what I'm doing."

So if you've been at this for a few years, um, you know what it feels like to have had success in the past and know that something's just not working the way it used to or that things could be a whole lot smoother. You're just not quite sure what. Uh, so that's exactly what we did together. We did, um, what's called a blind spot breakthrough, and this is something I started offering earlier this year truly as a result from working with so many talented creatives who were sitting in their businesses so close to what was happening and so close to their habits, that the blind spots are blind, right?

Like, it's not for lack of understanding or that they're not smart enough. It's just that they're so close to what they're doing, they're often not seeing the amazing opportunities that are existing within their business. So that's really what I've been doing for my clients, is coming into the business, getting this bird's-eye view of everything, and helping them to uncover the two to three biggest blind spots that are keeping them from the business that they're truly desiring.

So I wanna walk you through a really fun and specific, like, case study style story here with my client, Amanda, um, and with her full permission to share, like, what, what came out during this time together and what sorts of things were really keeping her from the life and the business that she was wanting.

And if you have the volume turned all the way up, you probably heard that little, the little knock at my d- office door, where my five-year-old had a question for me. Actually, he wanted me to mediate some disagreement between him and his sister. So we are living the called to both life over here as I record this.

Um, the kids are with their nanny, and they still... They know that I'm home, so they come and find me. And all of the working moms listening right now are like, "Yep. That is exactly how it goes You're listening to Called to Both, the podcast for ambitious women chasing both business dreams and little ones.

I'm your host, Joy Michelle. I'm a wedding photographer turned business coach and founder of Photo Boss. I have helped thousands of photographers and creatives grow their businesses. Here on the show, I teach about topics like visibility marketing, mindset, productivity, and going after your dream life. So if you're a photographer or an entrepreneur, there is something here for you.

This is not another business and marketing podcast telling you to do more, but rather how you can build your business and your income in less time and with greater ease. Join me here each week for bite-sized and actionable episodes that will encourage you on your Called to Both journey.

Okay, so let's dive into this case study, and I want you to be listening as we really go through, like, some of the details and things that were blind spots for Amanda. I think there's a lot of opportunity here for you to listen with this lens of, like, maybe there's some of this going on in my business.

Like, where might this be showing up for me? So I think this is gonna be one of those really actionable episodes where there could be some blind spots that are happening for someone else that are also happening for you So a little insight into how I work with my clients. When I do one-to-one work with my clients, I always start by looking at the whole picture.

So really, to me, the whole picture is not just your business, but your life and the capacity that you actually have. And I'm running my business in less than 20 hours a week, and I feel that it is so important to build a business that actually supports and can be sustained alongside of the life that you also want.

So really looking at that when I'm building these strategies and looking at my coaching clients' lives and businesses, we're really looking at, like, the whole picture. Keeping in mind that many things that's going on in their businesses are already working really well, and I want to be mindful of that. I want to come in

and get the lay of the land, not just throw a strategy at them or say, "Hey, here's what's worked for me," but rather look at it as let's make sure that we're only changing what actually needs to change instead of just, like, throwing the whole thing out and starting fresh, where really what could happen is that's completely unnecessary.

Like, we don't need to change the whole business. Many times we need to come in strategically and just identify the gaps. And I think the longer that you've been in business, the more habits and activities in your business truly just become almost invisible to you. They're second nature. They're the things...

It's just how you're operating. And my purpose here with the blind spot breakthrough is to really interrupt that and step into these patterns and make sure that you're not leaving money on the table where you could be making more, that things are happening in your business in a way that has the least amount of friction.

That you're not doing things the hard way, um, and really constructing a roadmap to fix whatever it is that is the blind spot in front of you. So the very first step is we're gonna fill out a very in-depth questionnaire, and this just helps me to be able to get on that first call with my client and jump straight in instead of having to pepper them with a million questions that we would need in order for me to, like, really sink my teeth into what's going on.

I'm able to n- do all of that before actually getting on the call. So in that questionnaire, I learned from Amanda that she was in the tail end of a commitment she had made to herself to post consistently and create consistent content for four months. So she was on social media, she was emailing her list, and she was blogging And had been doing this for four months and had felt like she had made zero traction.

And so when she came to me, she was saying like, "Hey, I am just... I, I'm coming to you in this moment of like, I need to, like, get some outside input into this business." Um, and she even used the word, like, "I'm desperate. I'm desperate for answers." But truly, like, working with her helped me to see that, like, she wasn't desperate.

She had come to a point where she was committed to this. After four months, she was committed to finding a real answer for why she had not experienced traction. So during our first call together, as we were uncovering all the findings of her questionnaire, and she shared more about what was going on in her business, like the things she had been doing for the past four months that had

not led to where she wanted to be, I figured out a few gaps, and I want to share those with you now.

So her three main gaps were a branding blind spot, a marketing blind spot, and a CEO blind spot. So I want to unpack the first one. So the branding blind spot Overall, at a high level, if we were to reduce this down, since we don't have time to go into the hour-long call on both ends of this intensive we did together, essentially what this boiled down to was that her dream client, if this dream client were to land on her website, they were not going to know in five seconds flat that Amanda was actually the perfect photographer for them.

There was a lack of cohesion, a overall sophistication to messaging gap that was going on. And because the visuals did not clearly match the level of experience that she was providing to her clients, there was just really a lot to be desired on the side of visuals, like the icon and the logo, a lack of clear headline, testimonials not high enough up on the page, and just generally not giving space and intentionality to each and every service that she provided in her business.

It was all kind of jumbled into one spot. And so by not having each of those things and offers in her business, given the proper space and testimonials and positioning, it really did a disservice to how incredibly talented Amanda actually was. So to fix this, we elevated the overall website with more consistent colors, fonts, and a text-based logo with her name, replacing an older, more dated logo that she had in her business before.

There was also a time where we were replacing some images, updating portfolio, and choosing those images very specifically with this new clientele and offer price point in mind. It's really important that, like, as you grow, what got you here may not be exactly what's going to get you to the next level.

So while images and portfolio in your website may have served you really, really well in the past, it could absolutely still be time to readdress, replace, and just adjust how your brand is coming off online And while this stuff might seem almost trivial, like not as important, the colors, the font, the way that the page loads, how things are laid out, they are essential and are little trust points that can be broken throughout the experience that your client has with you.

And testimonials are another one that I'm thinking that we really need to get into, like, a whole episode about this and the power of testimonials, like how exactly to present them, and how to choose these testimonials, and what the experience should look like for people coming to your website, because that is

so deeply impactful, especially right now when we're in an age where trust can be harder to come by, and it should be, honestly.

Like, the, the internet space is... It's hard to know. Like, who can I trust? What is real? What has somebody just presented as a fact or as their website or as their credentials that may not be truthful? And in that, like, trust recession era, I think your testimonials are one of the things that we must put extra attention and care in.

And when you curate the right testimonials and you present them in the right way, it can do a tremendous service for you to help bridge that trust gap. So we made a, a slew of changes on her website, um, and she was able to make these very quickly. Um, she just went down her list and was like, "Tell me what to do.

I'm gonna knock it out, and then we can get to the next thing." So if a dream client of yours were to land on your website, would she know in five seconds More about you, who you serve, and why she should hire you. And I think the other way to look at this as well is to ask if a client that you've worked with before, like let's say someone has fully experienced your service and your level of detail and your excellence and your personality, would that person then go back to your website and say, "Yes, those are the same thing."

The person that I experienced who showed up and created this incredible service for me and that website feel to be about on par. Of course, it can't have the dimensionality of working with you. Like, there's nothing like working with somebody, actually getting to know someone in real life or even online, in a video or whatever it is.

So your website, of course, is not gonna have that same measure of like character and like dimensionality as like a human, but does that seem to be the same? Like does it feel like the same person? Because I think that that is where I've seen some... a very common gap, is that a lot of service providers are providing an excellent service, but it's almost like they're secretly luxury, they're secretly incredible.

They have this tailored A to Z experience, and you would never know it from their website. They're n- doing themselves a disservice by not explaining that, not mapping that, not owning the space and making the claim like, "Hey, this is why we do what we do and why we believe what we believe. And so when you go to our website, you will see that.

Not just when we pick up the phone and talk to our customers, but when they're on your website." And I think if that's true for you, you could be sitting in a branding gap, just like Amanda was. The second gap that we identified was a marketing blind spot. And what was happening here was just a disjointed and overall missing that plan that brings it all together.

So when you work on many different platforms and create content in your business, it's not just about being consistent, it needs to have a cohesion and a mission that kind of d- like ties a thread through all of what you're doing as a marketer, so that you don't have one thing going on over here and then you're reinventing content over here.

You really do need something that is going to bring and tie things together, bring your clients through a customer journey, not just for your client to have that journey, but also for you. Because there is nothing less sustainable than having no marketing plan and being on multiple marketing platforms.

And Amanda said, like here's her own words. She said, "I had no con- no real consistency as to a marketing strategy." She said, "I was asking AI every day what to do instead of actually following a strategy or a plan." And when we started chatting about this, I knew that that was something that we needed to have her walk away with from our time together.

So together we built her a custom content plan based on her goals and the platforms she actually wanted to create on, plus having a newsletter. So that was important to her to maintain that email newsletter. So really what this did, m- the change that it created was that by building her a weekly content blueprint with rotating topics chosen specifically for her ideal client, thinking about her offers, keeping in mind her capacity, what happened was that she stopped asking AI what she should be doing in her business without much context for AI to really know specifically what Amanda's goals were.

And instead she said, "I'm just gonna print this out. I'm gonna sit down at my desk, and I'm going to use this as my point of reference." And I think that that's really important that we constantly are checking in with ourselves. Like, when you're sitting down to work in your business, do you know exactly what you should be creating?

Or are you almost coming back to that decision every day and deciding again? So when you don't have a plan or even like, um, a playbook or, or a c- cohesive connection between what's happening on your Instagram and your Facebook or, you know, Threads and TikTok, and when it all feels like a disjointed mess,

every day feels like a decision of like, "Okay, what am I, what am I gonna work on?"

What's a priority?" And you don't have that plan, and that will lose you so much time The third blind spot that we identified was the CEO blind spot, and that's really the woman behind the brand, the visionary. Like, you having the self-trust and understanding where you're going and the vision is so important.

And one thing that Amanda had really identified was that she was leaning a lot on AI to write the copy for her posts, not really directing it a whole lot. She said it... She was not giving it a lot of input. And instead of having some direction and giving it, like, prompts that would really take her ideas and her intellectual property and then make them, you know, ready for Instagram, for example, she was just asking it, like, "Hey, what, what should the caption be?"

And with that was getting very generic, polished, safe language that really could speak to anyone. And she said, you know, because it was speaking to anyone, it didn't really speak to anyone at all, and it was very safe. It actually lacked a lot of personality. It lacked her bubbly nature and her fun character that most clients that came to her would end up, you know, giving her a hug at the end of the photo shoot and feeling like they were friends and saying like, "Oh my gosh, we should go grab a drink sometime."

But none of that was actually embodied in her copy or in her content because she was leaning so heavily on AI, and she wasn't trusting that she knew how to write for her brand. You know? She, she had just lost sight of that and, and that trust in herself. So what we did to really build that self-trust back up was I actually said, "Hey, I need you to get back to the Artist Way."

And I've talked about the Artist Way so many times here on this, this podcast, but one of the principles of the Artist Way is three pages of longhand journaling every morning just when you start working. And I said, "You need to ask yourself, if this was easy and if I already knew the answer, what would I do?"

Because a lot of times you know what you believe in your business. You know what makes you different from other service providers. You know what your past clients have pointed out about you. But we're overcomplicating it, and we're filling our minds with AI or our competitors' feeds, and we're bombarded with so much information that getting down to back to those three pages of longhand to journaling is really, really powerful.

It's gonna get all of that junk out of your head. It's gonna help you get that all out, and I think it's really a challenge of slowing down long enough to actually listen to your own ideas. Don't multitask. Don't jump to the next project or throw something into AI. And hey, I will also say, like, I am not anti-AI.

I use AI in my business every day. But I want you to be in charge of the vision And the language that you're using, right? Like if, if AI spit something out for you, you would immediately be able to tell it whether or not it's even close because you have something you're comparing it to. You're not going to AI as a source, you're using it as a tool.

And that's so important as the visionary and the CEO of your business to be able to use these things as tools to help you get where you wanna go, not look to them for the very strategy that will take you somewhere because it, it really can't do that. And I, I-- one thing I wrote down w- for this episode, I was like, you know, AI is really only as good as the prompt and the context you've given it.

So putting yourself back in the driver's seat and really making AI a s- a team member and not the decision-maker or an idea generator is such an important nuance when we talk about the use of AI in your business After a couple days of Amanda saying reluctantly, I will... She will fully admit to you that she was reluctant about some of these changes.

She was reluctant to stop using AI so much at first to do some of the brand exercises I gave her. I gave her some homework. Um, she said, "Hey, you know, I, I didn't wanna do this," but let me tell you, she said there was a click moment where she was taking a discovery call. So not only did she get a inquiry for the first time in a while using some of this new instruction and language that I'd given her.

But she said, "I was taking a discovery call with a new client, and I wasn't using a script for the first time." Because that was another piece of the puzzle that I noticed that I don't think you need a script. That's what I told her. I said, "I, I think you know exactly what to say, and you're overthinking this."

You know, like, whether you've taken a mastermind or worked with someone in the past and they said, "Hey, here's your call script," I just don't think that's you, and I think the best thing you can do is, like, really connect with your potential clients on the phone and, and kinda throw that script out the window.

And she said it made all the difference that, like, not having to go off this script actually made clients more inclined to connect with her, and she's like, "These people are just craving me. They're-- They don't need a perfect script." And that was a, a big change, not just for the way she was working, but even, I think, for her own confidence as well.

I also asked her at the end of our coaching together, you know, "What changed?" Like, "What do you feel changed the most?" And she said, "My voice. Across social media, w- my website, my emails, and my blog, it's now actually mine and not AI-generated fluff." And I think this is that self-trust piece coming back again and again.

I think there were some tactics, there were strategies, and I did give her plans. But at the end of the day, this was so much less about a tactic and more about Amanda trusting herself again and seeing that that's really what her clients were craving. So from the beginning, she came in and had zero clients booked over a four-month stretch to, by the end of our three weeks together, having four clients on the books.

And then now I just followed up with her now after a couple weeks, and she said she is consistently booking new clients, and she has booked 10 new clients since working together. Um, and, I... This was so cool. She said she has 80 new Instagram followers. She is repurposing her content, um, from Instagram Reels onto TikTok and has 20 new TikTok followers just from those repurposed reels.

She got an entire booking, and I think that that's truly remarkable and, and just a testament to, like, you really don't need to be doing something new everywhere. Even by strategically repurposing content, she booked an entire client. So Incredible. Um, she also mentioned that sitting down at her desk now feels completely different, and this is so big.

If you sit down at your desk and you're like, "I don't even know what I'm working on," that is a huge indicator that the content piece and really having a strategy might be the biggest missing piece for you in your business. And the amount of time and money that gets wasted when you sit down at your desk and you don't have a plan, I just...

I cannot overstate this enough. It is a game changer. And I feel like seeing Amanda when we first met together about potentially working, like I, I get on discovery calls with all of my potential clients who want one, and meeting her then and then seeing her after I feel like this was truly a, like, not only a

different person, but somebody who's coming back to their- themselves, coming back to their creative, like, roots, really.

I think as creatives, we can lose the spark, we can lose the joy in our businesses. Um, if you are feeling a little bit, like, frustrated, uh, like you're wasting time, it's... There-- Honestly, like, when you're not making the money that you know you should be making, it can really make you close-minded to ideas, and it just, it shuts you down creatively.

Whereas on the other side of that, when you are s- you know, really in your own voice and you're feeling confident about your brand and you're posting consistently with your own creative ideas, and then you start to see the fruit of that, those bookings, like Amanda getting ten new bookings. And truly, these are not just bookings, but bookings at her rates that are consistent with the life she wants to be living.

I will also say, like, this is someone who's doing really luxury portraits, and I, I think that that's also very worth mentioning, um, that she's just... She's not doing shoot and burn, you know? She's here to actually create a luxury product for her clients. That that is such a night and day difference, like when you, when you see that person sitting in that seat on the other side.

Amanda also mentioned to me at the end that she has started to dream bigger. She's thinking even beyond photography clients now. She was thinking about ways that she could teach or share some of her digital offers because, like I said, she's been in business for thirteen years. She has really done a lot and has a wealth of knowledge, just a wealth of knowledge on so many different things.

And, you know, coming from not being able to book a client to then saying, "I'm dreaming big," is quite an inspiring transformation. So I think that, you know, there are so many things that you can pull from this episode, but I hope that some of the reminders about, you know, coming back to your creative voice, building self-trust in your business, and carefully using and discerning your use around AI, I think those are some of the big takeaways that I just want to restate here for you at the end.

Um, but yeah, if you like this kind of episode and you want more like it, send me a DM on Instagram. Um, and if you're interested in learning more about this specific type of offer, you can DM me the word "blind spot" on Instagram, and I will send you the information for a blind spot breakthrough. I do only take a few number of these clients each month because I am detailed and hands-on with my one-to-one coaching.

This is not very template-based. It's not a pep talk. It is truly advisory level strategy. So I do invite you to reach out, and I would be happy to send you information. We can always jump on a call and see if we're a good fit. You can go to my website at joymichelle.co or just reach out on Instagram. I love hearing from you guys, and, um, I hope that you have an amazing, amazing week.

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