

# Called To Both Episode 73

This episode is going to be a roundup of 10 lessons I have learned in 10 years in business. Now here in July, I am celebrating a huge milestone that I have officially been in business for 10 years, which like does not feel real and is so strange to even say. But yes, here we are. I've been in business for 10 years. And it is such a weird full circle moment to still be here to still be an operating business and to still be doing this thing called entrepreneurship. It is a wild ride, I consider the beginning of my business to be when I filled out my LLC paperwork and made the decision to really go for it like full send, I was committed, I had no backup plan, I was going for it. It was 2013. I was 22 years old. And I started Joy Michelle photography. And I haven't looked back since. So I'm going to treat this episode, almost like a time capsule of audio that I wish I could have sent to myself in 2013. These are lessons and takeaways that I think would just be so impactful to have known in those first few years of business, things that I wish I could tell the past version of myself.

But hopefully that can be helpful for you here today. And these are not going to be things like make content and charge your worth. And like light tips. I think these are a bit deeper, I've put some serious thought into this. And so I hope that wherever you are in your journey right now, whether you are in year one or year 10 And beyond that you still get something out of this episode. 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 to both. Let's dive in. All right, lesson number one that I had to learn the hard way was that spending money to make money isn't actually always the case.

And I got a lot of advice, I think I had some old antiquated ideas swirling around in my head that you have to spend money to make money, spend money to make money. But sometimes throwing money at a problem does not fix it. And this is a hard lesson to learn. This is something that I think all of us have to navigate and almost go through. And as hard as it is lose some money along the way, in order to figure out that not everything is a spending issue. And some things are better solved in other ways. And I've learned that spending money on the right thing at the right time is actually really hard. It's actually really complicated. And it's not just as simple as investing in things. And if you put money in that you'll get money out. And I think a really great example of this is that, when you're first starting out as a photographer, it can really feel like the biggest thing holding you back is the gear that if only you had the gear, you would be where you want to be in your business.

And this is a perfect example of throwing money at something does not always yield a certain outcome because I could hand my photography setup to someone that's worth \$10,000 Put it in their hands. And that does not mean that they could create what I can create, right? It doesn't mean that they'll know about lighting and composition. And it doesn't mean that they've gotten the visibility in their business. But I think we know this sometimes and still run to throw money at things. And one lesson that comes to mind is that early in my business was like year one, I paid for a magazine ad. And at the time, I thought I just need to get in front of the right people that I just needed to get in front of the right people. And so I spent about \$1,000 on a magazine ad and got absolutely nothing from it. And that's probably because I didn't have a website that would convert that I had proven that could convert and I didn't have a social media strategy. And the people reading that magazine were probably not my ideal client. And this was a

really expensive lesson. But this goes back to making sure that you're not throwing money at a problem that might need more than just money to solve it that you might need to take a step back and educate yourself or you might need strategy and some of these things can't just be fixed with money. Lesson number two is it all adds up and it all catches up.

This is especially relevant if you are looking to be in business for the long haul. You are not looking to just get rich quickly, and then kind of fizzle out and move on to the next thing. And the reason that this came up when I was thinking about this is, it's easy now years later to see that it all adds up in the end, that the people that cut corners, it catches up to them, that the people who put in the work and created the content and put in the grind that it caught up to them to. And I think that this is an important principle to remember, because your work that you're putting in right now, to go above and beyond that feels like it's not actually working. Sometimes it's like you're doing all the right things, and it feels like it's not actually working. It is excellence adds up the content that you create compounds, the SEO work that you do compounds, the portfolio that you create grows, the reviews and the testimonials begin to stack. And at the time, on any given day, it can feel somewhat pointless. But I promise you that it adds up. And I read about this principle in the book, the compound effect, if you've ever read that, you know what I'm talking about, I highly recommend it.

But it really it talks about this. And it's absolutely true. After a few years of doing just about anything for my couples, I had the reviews and the referrals and the vendor listings and the relationships to prove it. But at the time when I was in the day to day, and I was driving two hours both ways to a styled shoot and it was 90 degrees outside and I bought my own candles for the table, the doubt would start to creep in a little bit the questions of like, is this a waste of my time? Is this gonna get published? What if the models don't show up? Am I going to be able to produce the work that I've promised I can produce like, in those moments, it really starts to feel like maybe it's not all going to work out, right. And you might see this in another frame as well. You might see fellow business owners who maybe they're not operating their business in an ethical way, maybe they're over promising a little bit and being dishonest or not paying taxes. And I can assure you that it catches up eventually I have seen this happen. And I find that really assuring to myself to remember that the work that we put in, adds up. And if there's people cutting corners, it catches up. Okay, lesson number three decisions made out of fear, or out of FOMO rarely work out to your benefit. So gut check why you're doing what you're doing in your business.

If it comes from a place of not wanting to be left behind, or just trying to keep up with the Joneses and look successful. Give it some pause. Think again, I think hiring help before you really know what you want them to do is a perfect example of this. Because a lot of times that looks like the mark of success that looks like what everybody is saying that you should do. You don't want to get left behind or you're fearful that you're not going to look as professional, and it's going to cost you money. And if it doesn't actually lead to revenue, this is a surefire way to just blow through your money, like we talked about in lesson number one. So I actually have an episode here on the podcast. It's episode number 47. And it talks all about the things you need to do before you hire your next team member. So that's a great episode if you're thinking about that topic specifically. But really gut checking what decisions we're making and making sure that as we're operating in business, we're making decisions from a place of education and empowerment, and that you're being guided by things other than just fear. That is huge. And one that I wish I would have learned sooner.

Lesson number four is that failure is not fatal. If you are not failing regularly, you are probably not doing enough. That is what I believe now. But when I first started, I was super afraid to fail, super afraid. And as brave as I pretended to be, I was really nervous. I was afraid I was gonna get sued. I was afraid I was going to do my taxes wrong and the IRS was going to come after me. I was afraid to even check my bank account. I regularly ignored my bank account. I just sort of hoped that if I got paid a lot, and I just kept working, it would all work out. And that's a really unhealthy way to operate your business. And I love this quote by Winston Churchill.

It says Success is not final failure is not fatal. It is the courage to continue that counts. And I mean, oh my gosh, like I read that and like yes, 10 years later. Yes, that is so accurate. And I think one thing that helped me make the leap from that person that was scared to check my own checking account. I was scared to look at the numbers and constantly operating in this fear of failure to moving past that was YouTube. YouTube taught me to expect failure and reframe it that if I will. wasn't getting hater comments, I probably wasn't reaching anyone new. And that was a huge shift for me, I went from being scared of criticism and scared that someone was not going to like something that I said, to actually hoping that I annoyed someone, because it was a great sign to me not that I wanted to annoy anyone. But it was assigned to me that I had gotten visible that I got in front of someone, and that they disagreed with me, right. Like, if you're not getting visibility, you probably aren't also getting clients, but maybe you're also not getting criticism.

So there's this safe place that we tend to hang out in our business. And I think a lot of times, if we reframe all these failings as ways that we can learn and get back up and constantly better ourselves, we're not as scared to fail, actually, we just want to fail quickly and fail often. And that is so freeing as a business owner. And so that is one lesson that I have learned that I truly wish I could go back and tell myself at the beginning, I bet on you fail quickly, fail often and invest in you, because that's going to be your best investment. Overall, I think there was a time when I thought if I had an unhappy client, that I wouldn't be able to handle it. And so that really held me back from probably creating as much content and putting myself out there. And even just being at peace and happy with some of the success that I experienced. And the funny thing is, I have had unhappy clients, I have had an unhappy bride. And I thought at the beginning that that would destroy me that I wouldn't be able to continue on. But it didn't, I thought I would have to curl up into a ball and die. But I didn't. And I think that is so freeing, and so empowering. Lesson number five, grit and determination have actually taken me a lot further than my talent or skills ever have. When I first started my business, I remember reading all these stats and numbers about how often businesses fail. And how much entrepreneurs make how much women entrepreneurs make. And then even worse, how much women in the creative arts make. And I figured I would just have to be more talented, right?

Like, just get a little bit better, just be more talented and develop your skills. But years later, I think it's clear to me, I hope it's clear to you that I'm actually not more talented than most, I think I was a pretty darn good photographer, but not the best. I really wasn't the best. But I did outwork most people. And I did show up when it didn't make sense. And I did have a lot of grit and determination. And one time when I was really defeated after a launch in my business where I made zero sales, like absolutely none. I was sitting in the front seat of my car. And I remember saying to Felipe, I just feel defeated. But I know I'm not defeated. Because I can only actually be defeated if I don't get back up. And I always get back up. And I know I was mostly just talking to myself, you just happen to be there. And he's nodding. But that really stood out to me because hearing myself say I always get back up really just solidified to

me. I'm not the most talented, I'm not the most skilled, I just always get back up. And that is probably the most surefire way that you can win is to just always get back up.

And so the next week after that, after I got out of the car, pulled myself together, stop feeling sorry for myself, I quickly put together a new offer. I sold to my Instagram audience, I made five high ticket sales that next week, I realized like most of this was in my head. And that your mindset that you bring into your business is like just a make or break thing. And your mindset really determines how determined you are right? Like how much grit you have in those moments of feeling like a failure. So I think that like becoming mentally strong, through books, through prayer, through educating myself, that kind of thing. I think that is so crucial. And I think this is largely about who you allow into your space.

So the content that you consume, who is coaching you in your life and in your business, who is in your peer circle, like what other business owners are you talking to? This is so important, and I think we naturally produce so much self doubt and defeat all on our own, that you need to make sure that you aren't getting any extra doses of that from any other place in your life. Those words of doubt are really only coming from you and then immediately being combated with truth by the circle and the people that you choose to surround yourself with. Alright, I am interrupting myself here briefly to share something I am just truly so excited about. And that is helping you get wildly visible and build grant authority. So if you're listening to this right now and you love Have to uplevel in your business, but you kind of feel like a Best Kept Secret than this message is for you.

You need a visibility marketing strategy in your business, having more visibility can lead to new revenue streams, new opportunities, and of course making more sales. Inside of my three month coaching accelerator, we work one on one to craft a custom strategy for your business so that you can not only get that insane visibility, but build the brand authority and sell more of your offers. At the same time. My past students inside of this program have doubled their reach on YouTube created and sold new coaching offers and so much more. I want to invite you to apply to work with me inside of this three month coaching container. You can get all the details at [joy.michelle.co](http://joy.michelle.co) or simply scroll down in your podcasting app. And I'll have a link for you there as well. Lesson number five businesses fail for one reason they don't have enough money.

Now I shared that I didn't like to look at my bank accounts. So I'm sure you can believe me when I say I didn't not watch closely any of my business finances. In the first couple of years, I had my head down, I was just working chugging away. And more importantly, I was not paying myself regularly. So even though I was bringing in clients, and I was making sales, my family and my husband like on the personal side of things, we were not seeing any of that money, maybe at best we would pay ourselves something after tax season. So it's like once a year, which is really not okay. Then I would say about four or five years ago, we implemented profit first. And that I swear just flipped this whole money mindset that I had on my head, it flipped everything about how I looked at cash and profit, and transformed the way that I feel about my business too.

I now pay myself every two weeks I receive profit distributions quarterly as the owner of my company, I know what we have an operations like it is like night and day, I highly recommend Profit First, by the way, to all my clients, all my students, everyone who will listen, I truly wish I had implemented this sooner. Because at the end of the day, the only thing that's going to truly put you out of business is not enough cash, like full stop, that is the end, you have got to know where your cash is going, you've got to be fully in charge of it. And I think the minute you start paying yourself regularly, something shifts,

something shifts, and it gets real in the best possible way. Okay, lesson number seven. If you're excited about your content, even if it doesn't make perfect sense at the time, it's going to be 10 times better than if it was the content you felt forced to make. I should have abbreviated that title, in retrospect, but I think you get what I'm saying. Your personal passion and interest in a topic will top almost anything else, almost any other logic of what you should be doing or what other people are doing. And this is so important. Because when you're excited about something, other people somehow sense that excitement, they really, really do. And this is so important.

Probably some of the best content I ever created was content that didn't actually make sense on paper. It wasn't in complete alignment with my offers, I didn't know exactly where it was gonna go. I didn't have a strategy, I was giving away too much value, as some people told me, I was just sharing everything for free. But now looking back, I realized that because I was sitting in this place of originating with a topic I cared about that I was excited about that I was passionate about, that made the content take off. So sometimes the best possible thing you can do is just try something new that you actually care about. So I also think that if you're someone that constantly overthinks your content, and you're not sure how it connects, and if it's too confusing, or if your audience will receive it, I think sometimes the best thing you can do is set a very short deadline and try something instead of thinking do something. Because sometimes this is going to give you the next best step and following your excitement about anything. And following your excitement around that thing has always been more fruitful for me. And my audience has always engaged more. Lesson number eight, your past client is your most likely future client. I learned this from the office like so many things about business, but really truly I've experienced this in full force. I used to think that in order to get another client I kind of had to like start over in my marketing and find new people out in the universe and get new people that have never heard of me before. But now, I know that some of my past clients are my most likely referrals, they are my most likely repeat clients, and they are my biggest cheerleaders.

This is such a valuable thing. And I think I resisted this because I was a wedding photographer, a lot of times, I thought, well, I can really only book them once, right? Like, if all goes well, they only get married once and I already got their, their money. But I was totally overlooking all of the referral potential, and ways that I could have continued to work with them and serve them in that mindset. And I figured out, you know, so many times these couples ended up being yearly portrait clients, or twice yearly portrait clients. And every time I would put out availability for portraits, they would come back. And so that's one thing I do wish I would have adopted sooner that I'm really embracing now in my business 10 years later. Lesson number nine, is that nothing lasts forever. So think about the ending right now. After this much time in business, I've noticed that there's probably no software, no team member, no work relationship that will truly last forever, at least not in the same way as when it first starts in business. So always enter into those decisions with an exit strategy in mind, especially team members or partnerships, have terms in your contract for how things will end. I don't think enough people talk about this. But I have had so many different contractors in my business come and go. And one thing I will say is that the ones that we had the clearest expectations in the contract, and the clearest exit plan, were the ones that I feel that those relationships were most preserved at the end of it. I also think for this point, the other thing to be thinking about is an exit strategy from your own business. So whether this is investing that you're doing so that you can have a retirement filling, a 401 k or a Roth IRA, or pivoting to add streams of revenue to your business.

And our next series here on the podcast is going to be all about building out new revenue streams. So be sure to stick around, hit subscribe if you're not subscribed. But thinking about the exit from your

business is something that I don't think a lot of creatives or a lot of, you know, just beginner business owners, or maybe it's some other reason I don't think this is commonly talked about, I don't think that we go into business thinking, I'll sell this, and then I'll move on to the next thing. A lot of entrepreneurs though, you know, come into tech or into other fields, they think about how they're going to sell that business, they think about how they're going to exit from that business. But I think sometimes when we come to a business we feel called to or that we're really passionate about, we don't think about what it's going to look like to be 1020 years older, or to have kids and be in a different season of life. And when I started my business, I was 22. And I was in a photography business, I was in a different chapter of life than I am now as a 32 year old mom with multiple kids. And now my business looks really different. But that's with a lot of intention. And that's taken a lot of work.

The one really the only thing that stayed the same in my business is the fact that I'm still in it. And arguably, I've changed too. So really spend some time this week thinking over the question, what is my exit strategy? Do I have one who could help me build one? Okay, lesson number 10 Is that success is an average Tuesday, I have reached a ton of milestones in my business. I'm so grateful in this time, in my business to have experienced so many cool things to have had multi five figure launches to reach 60,000 subscribers on YouTube to have magazine covers with my work or accolades. But I believe that life is made up of just regular days. Those exciting moments are such a rarity in terms of the grand scheme of running a business. Those are such little blips on the radar. Tuesdays happen once per week. And now if you build a business where in your life, you are, on an average Tuesday living a life that feels like success, because you are where you want to be with the people you want to be doing what you want to be doing, then you've won.

So my question for you would be what is your average Tuesday? And what is one thing that you could do to shift or build into your week so that your average Tuesday actually feels like a raging success. I hope that these 10 takeaways have been insightful or helpful in some ways to you. Next week, we're going to kick off a new series all about revenue streams here. You're on the podcast and it's gonna be really juicy. So hit subscribe, and you won't miss out on any of those upcoming episodes. Thank you so much for joining me here on call to both. Now go get after your own version of what it means to be called to vote. 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.