

**Joy:** Welcome back to the called to both podcast. Thank you so much for tapping on this episode today. I'm excited that you're here. So this episode is going to be diving into this concept of growth and what this has looked like in my business throughout the years. And I think we all want growth. I think we would all say that we are working towards growing our businesses, right?

But often we don't want to talk about the discomfort and the setbacks, the challenges, and even the mindset that is required for growth. And in this episode, I get to share some of those things as I reflect back on my business, on the gritty start of my business and what has changed. taken through the years to navigate some of those setbacks and challenges.

So I get to share a little bit more with you today about those things. So you're going to hear where my business began, some of the wild and crazy setbacks that I experienced and what I think we can do universally to become more successful and to experience more growth. This episode originally aired on my friend Dan Moyer's podcast called the Focused Photographers Podcast, which is full of interviews like this one for photographers looking to experience growth and mastery in their business and in their mindset.

So I'm going to have that linked down in the show notes. Definitely go check out the Focused Photographers Podcast. If you like interviews like this, you are absolutely going to love Dan's show. He just does an amazing job and he has a whole library of episodes like these for you to dive into next. All right.

So I'm going to go ahead and play the episode now. 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 call to journey.

**Dan:** Hey, I'm Dan Moyer and welcome to the Focus Photographers podcast where photographers gather. If you follow me for a little bit, you'll know that

this podcast and the platform, uh, Get Focus is all relatively new within the last two years or so. I realized that I have a story to tell and that I do business pretty differently and that this is the platform to share it, but it takes a certain amount of grit and persistence and just continuing to show up to keep growing.

My guest today is no stranger to growing and putting your mind to something and just continuing to craft the life that you want while helping others along the way and giving back. Joy Ailman, known online as Joy Michelle, is a photographer turned YouTuber and business coach. She's a mom of two kiddos, three and one at the time of recording.

She is the host of a really amazing podcast called called to both that focuses on women and the balance between the entrepreneurial spirit and being a parent. She is the founder of photo boss, which is a Facebook group with over 10, 000 members. And it also has several online programs. She is so wonderful and so gracious and has such a heart for helping other people and photographers just to grow and reach the best form of themselves.

She's someone who I wanted to have on this podcast for a very long time. As you'll hear in this conversation, I reached out to her back in August of 2021, I think it was. Um, and it just didn't come together, but finally it came together and this conversation is so wonderful. So I'm very thankful to bring my conversation with Joy Michelle to you.

I hope you enjoy it.

All right, Joy. Thank you so much for being here. I'm so glad that this is finally happening and that you're here.

**Joy:** Yeah. Thank you so much for having me, Dan. I'm excited.

**Dan:** Yeah, so as we're talking before we started recording, we were kind of catching up, and I was going through my Instagram feed and my Instagram messages and realized that this podcast is a long time coming.

I think I reached out initially in like August 2021, and you were, I think on maternity leave. And we just both had a lot going on. That's when I was first launching. Thank you for listening. There was so much goodness. Um, and it was for a totally different topic, but I'm so thankful that we get to be here actually for a topic.

I think you're really going to open up and share a lot of amazing things about, which is growth. So I'm so thankful that you're here and we're finally get to do this.

**Joy:** Yeah. I had completely forgotten that you had reached out in the past and like you said, for lots of reasons, probably being maternity leave as like the number one, it just didn't pan out.

And so. Yeah. I'm excited. I feel like this was the topic it was supposed to be. So we're here to make this happen. Finally.

**Dan:** One thousand percent. So, so you've got a big following. You've got a huge YouTube channel. Um, you've got a podcast, which is spectacular called to both. Um, especially mostly just for mamas and like really handling this entrepreneur and, and mama side of things, right?

But for people who, you know, might be listening to this and aren't super familiar with you, what's a little bit of your story and, and how you got to where you are today?

**Joy:** Yeah. Well, how long do you have? I am going into my 10th year in business, which is wild to say. Um, but yeah, I mean, starting a business at 22, honestly, just not wanting to get a real job and wanting to make some art and some money has, has Brought me to where we are today, but I can give you the cliff notes version.

I Got married, uh to my husband. We were still in college. And so it's senior year. I'm a graphic design Major and all my classmates are getting ready to go get design jobs And they're all preparing their portfolios and their resumes and I'm watching CreativeLive. I'm studying the photographers. Oh, yeah.

Trying to figure out, yeah, everyone's like, Joy, how's it going? How's your logo portfolio? And I'm watching the, the greats, you know, like I'm, I'm watching Jasmine Starr and all the biggies. And so, um, I just decided I wasn't going to apply for real jobs and I was going to go off and start. start an LLC and take this leap.

And so in our basement condo, I filed the paperwork and decided to start what has become Joy Michelle Photography. I took the leap, and I guess it was about a year of, you know, just making so many mistakes and trying all the things and like making your first website, which I wish I had like screenshots of all of that stuff to begin with, but it, you know, it had to have been cringe.

And, um, within a year though, I mean, I was, I was booked out. I had like 15 to 20 of my own weddings. And, um, that was the start of it all. I was just cold emailing photographers in the DC area asking to second shoot. And that's, that's, that's, How I got, like, my first gigs. It was grit.

**Dan:** It was grit. Oh, yeah.

Yeah. Guerrilla marketing.

**Joy:** Who did I think I was, right? Like, I just was sitting there, like, a child, trying to figure out what I was doing, but I was just I was just really determined to see if I could make it work, see, and I was very inspired by my own wedding photographer. I didn't know that you could make a living at photography unless you worked at like JCPenney studio or National Geographic until I met her.

And so I ended up interning with my wedding photographer and then I ended up second shooting for her like years later. It was like such a cool, like full circle moment. But then head down for a few years, just a blur of like weddings, a lot of energy drinks, which now I'm like, what? Like, I'm such a mom. I can't do that to my body anymore, but it was a good time.

And a couple of years into that, my little brother convinced me to start a YouTube channel because he and his roommates at the time had started a channel that had taken off and grown. And he just thought it was the coolest thing. And he, his confidence in me. Kind of just transferred and I somehow got like the gusto to to start making YouTube videos And that really like started the second chapter of my brand and like what would be, you know, for years and years growing the channel and then the Facebook group and then courses and photo boss, which we were, we trademarked last year.

And so it's been this like slow progression of just like you said, like layering it on and I'm like, Picturing this, like, Smith Island cake where you just, like, keep adding, like, and, like, I have no chill. Then I add a podcast and I just kind of keep going. No chill. Like, my husband knows, like, I'm going to turn around and be like, okay, it's time for a conference or it's time for a book.

And he's going to be like, all right, here we go.

**Dan:** I actually want to go back to something you said in the very beginning, which was like, it was just about cold emailing. It was just about, like, you know, putting your head down and going and that, that grit. Cause I, I'm not sure that that's the way it is now.

Like, I remember being in the very beginning, 12 or 13 years ago now, being very aware of just like seeing engagement rings on, on hands. Like that's what I always saw. And then I would hand out my business card. And, and there was just this, like, I remember the first session I ever booked was in the pizza shop that my now wife and I always would go to.

And there was a couple standing in front of us. She had an engagement ring on. I was like, Oh, Oh, are you engaged? When are you getting married? Blah, blah, blah. And I was just chopping it up with everybody and gave them my business card and literally three days later I did a bridal session for them because they were, he was in the military and they were leaving, blah, blah, blah, but like, I wonder how much of that is sort of lost in the online space or whatever.

So can you talk a little bit more about like that, that like grit that you had or maybe that mindset you had in just the very beginning?

**Joy:** Oh yeah, I, I was thinking about this the other day because I was on a road that I had driven a lot doing stylized shoots, meeting at vendor, like with vendors at venues, like, and remembered like how much, like, boots on the ground, like, networking that I did.

And it kind of just exactly what you're saying. I was like, wow, it's crazy how we spend so much time or I work with photographers, especially now who they they're holding their phone and that's an incredible tool, but they're just spending so much time on like the other side, wondering like, okay, how do I get attention and how do I, Get booked and get seen and get visibility and like those are great questions but there's still so much that can be done and that should be said for like networking and like Actually meeting and connecting with people which is like you said it has shifted a lot now with social media But then also through covet and like things have gotten so murky, but I really Really still strongly believe that like there's so much magic in that like hustle in the beginning of just saying like hey Do you need a photographer or here's what I do?

and I do remember people asking what I was doing and I it felt like I was lying a little bit like I was like i'm A photographer and this is like what because it's it doesn't feel real yet. You know, like And a lot of that is in our own heads and it's our mindset, but I had to almost practice saying like, I'm a wedding photographer and I, you know, this is what I do.

And this is how do you describe your work? Or like, Oh, what kind of weddings? And like, we have to get good at like talking about it. And it's

amazing how like one conversation with someone in real life, somewhere like at a pizza shop can literally lead to revenue and. Future referrals and it there.

There's so much so much merit in what you said. Yeah.

**Dan:** Yeah, there's like there's like you have to like just find the language around it Especially when you're standing on your feet and somebody's asking you that like the elevator pitch, right? Like who talks about that idea anymore the elevator pitch?

It's all because we write emails We read all this stuff where it's like, oh, I've got I got Plenty of time to think, uh, and draft out this idea. So that definitely played a part in your kind of growth aspect. But I love this idea of like a cake where you're just like adding one thing on top of the other.

And you have, you do, you have so much going on. And when I was preparing for this episode, I was just like, Oh my gosh, like there is a million different things that you have going on. Like, you know, you went from wedding photography to, you know, being an educator, you got the YouTube channel. I. You just started a podcast recently, you've been featured all over the place from like Adorama and and Honeybook and your Facebook group, which you're incredibly active in has over 10, 000 members, you got the photo boss thing, like, goodness gracious, right?

You've got all this stuff going on. And I guess maybe on just a more practical level, like, how do you do it all? Like, how do you handle it all?

**Joy:** I mean, I'll I'm not even going to be fancy and pretend I do. I, I don't like, I think that the more that I've added, the more that I've also accepted help and seen that I don't have to single handedly do it all.

Um, and I think that that will keep you small. That will limit your growth tremendously to think that you have to be that solopreneur forever. It, it, it's like the artist side of our brain is very like egocentric and smaller and then the business and like growth side, you need to let that one make more decisions as you add.

Like the bigger your dreams are, the more that you do need to let people into them. And I think that's both having help in the home, but also having help in the business. Because for me, it's like if my home is falling apart, my kids are not thriving, the business is not going to be thriving. Yes. We are like.

Such a, an important part of that too. Like if I'm not thriving and I'm not taken care of, I'm not going to have great ideas. I'm not gonna be able to show up with tons of energy on lives and help my students and coach with a lot of intention. I'm going to be forgetting things are going to be slipping through the cracks.

And so I don't do it all. I think it's like the secret, but also I think it's, it's taught me to. To not hold everything like so close. And it's made me grow as both a leader and my business grow along with it. So what I thought I was doing when I was allowing people to come into the business or help me in the home or delegate and outsource.

I thought, okay, yes, the business is going to grow. This is great. Like, I'm just like eye on the prize, but really it's developed me as a human. And that's like something I've learned year over year in business. Like the more I grow personally, the better the business does, which is annoying because I want it to be just like strategy and marketing and, and.

I'm that person though, where I meet a successful person and I'm like, so how did you do it? And they're like, okay, so I'm going to tell you, you know, this is, it's, it's a little bit of mindset. I'm like, okay, but like, what, you know, did you go with your audience for on that Facebook ad? Like, tell me the real secret.

And I just don't, I don't want to hear how the self development plays a role, but it, it just, time and time again, and I see this in the lives of my students too. are such a big part of it. And really are like the beginning and the end of your success is like what's happening in your head, which is super annoying to the achiever types, but it's true.

It's really, it's really true.

**Dan:** This mindset thing is really interesting. And I, when I was digging back, looking through all of the things that you've written, the hundreds of blog posts and all these things, uh, I found this one little section on one of your blog posts. And it was sort of like, I think the title of it was How I Grew My Photography Business.

That was the title of the post. And there's also a subsequent YouTube video about it. And there's this one section kind of like tucked down at the bottom. At the top, it was about like, you know, the gear you use. And then after that, it was like, Oh, here's the tools I use online. There's this little section about mindset, and I wanted to read that, um, because I'm glad you actually brought this up so I could read it.

It says, Mindset is a tough thing to overcome, but if you can switch the way you think to a more positive outlook, the more you will go forward with your business. My mindset was holding me back. I had to remember that everyone I looked up to, whether it's other photographers or people in general, are also human.

Another hurdle I had to overcome was asking myself, why not me? Why can't I do this? That helped me believe in myself and have the grit to grow and become successful with my business. Believe in yourself. And it's funny that you didn't want to, like, acknowledge this, like, mindset part. And I think a lot of people also do that because if you look on that video on the YouTube.

All the stuff about books, all the stuff about like strategies and tools to use all have like the highest replay rate. And then once it gets to mindset, it all just goes super low, but nobody's paying enough attention about this, right?

**Joy:** We don't want to hear that because I think secretly we're still holding on to the lie that like we're one strategy or like secret tactic away from our dreams and from the income and from, you know, booking the destination weddings or being booked at the higher prices.

And I, I am. I love a good strategy. Like I am a total business book nerd and I will geek out on that stuff. But like 10 years later in business and I'm still seeing that, like, when I really think about the biggest achievements that I've made, I think it all started from flipping, not like, I think it ends with the why not me, right?

Like you were reading that. But I think before that we have to when we're saying, when we start hearing the thought of like, Well, who am I to do that? It's already been done. I don't have anything special to add to that space, or I'm not as talented as them. When you identify that, and then you flip that and say, But they're not special.

They just decided to go for it. So why can't I do it? And like really, truly seeing that, like the closer you get to all of your heroes, the more you realize they're all just people and I never had like. Like an overnight moment that the YouTube channel was like such a slow painstaking growth. The Facebook group, such like no viral moments.

I had one real go viral. And I don't think it like did anything for my business really, but like that was my singular like viral moment. And so I really feel like. It's about your mindset. It's a, it's also a determination thing, but you have to



remember like, there's going to be setbacks. Like you're going to have so many defeats and discouragements and setbacks and being able to come back to the right, like, place of like reset and like learning from those things is really important too.

I think I've, I've had so many strange and, Weird setbacks. I've had my website hacked. I've had You know team members just ghost me and leave me with no deliverables essentially stealing from me I've had to let team members go because Things shifted and changed and I couldn't pay them. It's like such a humbling moment So just like knowing that like anybody who's achieved anything They don't actually have something you don't besides maybe the belief that they can

**Dan:** man that that whole Uh, there's two things that pop up and I feel like I've heard this, like, idea, um, maybe from Amy Porterfield, who's like, you know, you know who Amy Porterfield is for sure.

I love her. Yeah, she's awesome. Um, her and then somebody like, sort of on the opposite end of like the spectrum, David Goggins. I don't know if you've ever heard of him. No,

**Joy:** I haven't.

**Dan:** David Goggins like, he's like a Navy SEAL, Green Beret, like, F this, F that, like, hardcore dude.

**Joy:** The opposite of Amy, I hear. Yes,

**Dan:** but both, both like a similar message.

Amy Porterfield says, like, whenever you have those, like, doubting moments, she says, well, you know, why not me? Right? Like, what, like, why can't it just be me? And then, uh, David Goggins on the other side, he's like, when you have these, like, moments of doubt, And you're like wondering, well, can I make it? Can I do, he's like an ultra marathoner, like has world record for pull ups, like all this stuff.

He's like, I just start playing this like soundtrack in my head. And he's like, everybody's coming at me with, no, you can't do this. Or the, the imposter syndrome sets in. He says, what if, what if I could just do it? What if I could set the pull up record? Right. And it's like, I'm getting tingle. He's just thinking about both of those things.

And this mindset thing just plays so much of so much a part of it. That's

**Joy:** a powerful question. Like, but what if? Like, what if I could? What if I tried? What if it worked out?

**Dan:** What if

**Joy:** people did watch? Or they did pay me the rates? Like

**Dan:** yeah,

**Joy:** what if like leave it open instead of saying I could never

**Dan:** that's so it's so Weighty because it just like it just leaves it open, right?

Like when he when I heard him speak about this He was talking about how he was planning to be in the navy seals and sort of off track here but I feel like this is like I love this stuff. Um, and he was like, uh, he went to the recruiter's office and the recruiter saying, do you know that there's only been 35 black Navy SEALs ever?

And he's like, what if I could be number 36? Right? And he's like, he's like, that's where my mind automatically goes. And I think that I love that you cultivate this side of things where it sort of made you uncomfortable, but you leaned into it and said, no, no, I'm not just going to be about strategy. I'm going to be about diving into this stuff that makes me uncomfortable and, and really digging in and like, Dealing with that discomfort and making it happen.

**Joy:** Yeah, and I love that you mentioned like the discomfort of growth because I think that is a huge part of it and there's going to be discomfort and I think growth implies change and change implies discomfort and we forget that. We see like the The goal that we set and like with the new year coming up, we're all going to be in this mindset of like, okay, what am I going to achieve in 2023?

And where do I want to be? And I love that. Like, I'm all about like the goal setting and the goal planning, but I, you, it's easy to see those things and think like, I just need to be. That one course or that one thing to get there, but we forget a lot of getting there means changing what we've been doing or changing who we're surrounded with or like the voices that are speaking in And you know how we're being influenced what we're consuming that requires a lot of like self awareness and then there's discomfort in that And so that's like the like not fun

part of growth where you are going to be stretched, I think is like a good word for it.

Like it's going to be uncomfortable, especially starting something new. Oh my goodness. Like there's nothing worse than wanting to be where you're just not at technically yet. Or, you know, seeing what other people have done even in like a platform, like, you know, starting over on a platform, like a podcast or a YouTube channel, or like starting at zero with a Facebook group, it's humbling.

And yeah. It is frustrating to know that your vision is so much bigger than the current numbers and that's uncomfortable But that's a sign of being in a place where you're gonna grow because the dream is so much bigger than what's happening currently That you're forced to either Give it up and retire it or grow into it and expand.

**Dan:** You've talked several times about this like compound effect thing where it's like you have the big dreams, you have the big goals and you want them right now. Um, and you have to have the, the, the grit and the tenacity to like go after it. But a lot of us want like that one thing, you've said this a couple of times, you want that one thing that, you know, we're one course away or whatever.

But it's rarely the, you know, things that we do 4 times that, you know, make a big difference. It's the journey that sort of you had of like, no, I'm just going to keep putting blog posts out there. So that way, at some point, the SEO is going to catch up and I'll start and I'll start showing up. Can you talk about that kind of part of what you're talking about?

**Joy:** Yeah, I would. I'm digging back

**Dan:** in there to some of your posts. I know.

**Joy:** Yeah. No, this is so true. I think what, what I noticed when I would tell the story of how I started on YouTube, for example, is that I think it was like 2017 that I decided I was gonna post a video every week for a year and somebody was like, well, that's That's a lot.

That's a huge commitment. And then when I thought about it, I was like, well, yeah, but like, how do you know if it's working? A lot of times, like we throw content marketing out there. We try it a little bit and then we're like, it doesn't work. You know, Instagram hates me or I don't get my blog posts don't get found.

But like the true tipping point is sometimes so much further along than we want it to be. That like we didn't, you know, We didn't reach it. And I like, I remember this like illustration of like the, there's like a gold miner and it's like, you don't, you don't, you can't tell right before you hit gold, how close you actually are to hitting gold and the compound effect, like the book, the compound effect had a huge impact on me in those first couple of years where like, You.

do something and you want to keep faith in that thing like publishing and you know, developing yourself professionally and as a photographer, but like sometimes the outcome or like the bottom line isn't, there's no proof yet. Like it's, you're just, you have to keep faith. And when it's just you, that can be really hard.

So like some of the stories in that That book just like I kind of clung to those and thought like if I do this long enough Something will come of it something will come of it and I will either find my next thing or I will learn the lesson I need to learn or I will something will happen because you can't keep doing something and not get better at it

**Dan:** And the book is called The Compound Effect?

**Joy:** Mm

**Dan:** hmm.

**Joy:** Yeah. Do you remember, do you remember the

**Dan:** author off the top of your head?

**Joy:** No. Sorry. That's all good.

**Dan:** Um, we'll definitely make that happen. I'll put it in the show notes, but The Compound Effect. That's really interesting. That gold miner thing. It's right. It's like, it's like a shot of like in the dirt and it's a guy walking away.

Uh, with like this like really, he's like chipping away looking for gold and there's like this really thin wall, like one more hit and he would have broken through to see the gold or something, right?

**Joy:** Yup. Yup. And I, I think that's like such a cool and powerful illustration. And I'm also like a pretty determined person.

Like I, I don't like to. I don't like being told no or I mean I think the same thing happened as I became a mom and people kind of implied that like I would have to choose or that I couldn't do both well or that I couldn't have both. And so they're like called to both just kind of just kept coming up for me.

I was like, but what if I, what if I want to be both an intentional mom and a super awesome business owner? And what if I want it to look good? And I, I feel like a lot of times as entrepreneurs, we're on like a, a journey of like building a lifestyle. It's not just a business. It's a life. An entire lifestyle that supports the life we want to lead.

And the business is like a big pillar of how that becomes possible. But then it has led to like more self development and more, you know, giving yourself permission to go after other things that you want to go for too.

**Dan:** You mentioned the kids and I, and there's also like a, there's a couple of things in like what you said that I think are really powerful.

And one, it's the, I don't like failure thing. I don't want to fail. Um, and I love that, you know, persistence that you have and, um, and the desire to want to keep going and push the envelope and say, well, you know, why can't I have both? Why, you know, what if I could make both work? And I think that's definitely a huge part of it.

And your ability to also say, well, I want all these things, but also be like very humble enough that when you say, okay. When I have kids, this is going to be different. And I wonder if you could talk about, you've got two kiddos now. You've sort of alluded to it a little bit, but like, how has that sort of transformed your business and, and how have you started continuing to grow through this experience, even of having kids, but also saying, you know what?

No, I, I can show, because in some ways you're going to, you want to be an example for your kiddos, right? You want to say like, no, no, no, this is hard. They're going to get it one day. But. But my mom made it work, right? So if my mom can make it work, uh, and my parents can make it work, like, why can't I? Right?

**Joy:** Yeah, I do. I, I want to show my kids what's possible and show them very literally, like, you can do whatever you want. And I want to, like, support that, but also demonstrate what's possible. Um, yeah, I have two crazy toddlers. And they have changed my perspective on business a lot. Are there anything

**Dan:** other than crazy toddlers?

I

**Joy:** don't think so. I, like,

**Dan:** I a chill toddler, reach out to me and we're going to talk.

**Joy:** Let me know, like, what are you feeding them? What did you do while pregnant? Like, give me the formula because mine are not chill. Uh, but yeah, I, I, I've had a business, I had a business for at least five years before having kids.

And I, Love business. I love talking business. I love dreaming about business and working in my business And I think that was one of the things that I was scared I was gonna lose honestly like becoming a parent and I wanted to be a parent But I also wondered like would I still love it? Would I still want to grow and develop a business and I think in the same breath like am I allowed?

Am I allowed to do those things? And so that was something that I personally navigated and came out the other side saying like, wait, I'm, I'm just going to go ahead and say yes. Like, I'm not going to look for this person's doing it, or this person says no, or this person says, this is what like the good mom does or the good business owner does.

I'm just going to do me because I'm called to both. I'm going to pursue both business and motherhood and I'm going to pursue them well. in part time hours, but still make a full time income. And to anyone who says you cannot have the YouTube channel and the podcast, I'm going to say, just watch me as long as I want to.

I will. I don't know if I'll do it forever, but I definitely challenge people when they say it has to look a certain way. A lot of times when people say something has to look a certain way, they're talking more about themselves and how they navigated something. or their dreams left on the table. And then they really are saying about you.

But yeah, since having kids, lots of shifts, lots of shifts, I would say I view my time so differently now because my time is not just my own. And so I value it a lot more and I've gotten. Really into like time management and productivity and just trying to to become the most efficient version of myself Because of those limited work hours, but I would also say that I have had to Look at my business as a whole very differently instead of saying like, Oh, I'm an artist.

And like, I trade my time for money. I really like to look at my business as the problems that it solves and the SOPs that we've created. And now adding the team in seeing us as like a unit and that the business is a little bit of like a separate thing for myself as well. Because I want it to be separate.

I think at first it's like, your business is your baby. My business was my first baby. Now that I have real babies, I don't want my business to be my baby. I actually want to be a little less precious about it. I want my business to serve my life. And if it's going to do that, I have to be free of it in some ways.

I have to be a little less. Holding on super tight and, and be a little more open handed about it. And a lot of times that looks like bringing on a team member and help. And that's hard. That's hard when you're like, it's your baby, like you mastermind, you know, the whole concept of your business was nothing.

And then you created it. Um, I think especially the artists. Like we, we get precious about it. We have a strange ability to make things more complicated than they need to be. Coming from like the photography world. I know that like, you know, that like that messy, like want to be creative and free side of artists can come out and definitely get in the way.

**Dan:** I'm really interested about that sort of tug of war between it being your baby and then saying, Oh, I want to let this go now. Was that just like, Oh, you know what? I've just got to hire a team. Um, this is like the answer. Or was it like, no, I don't like, this is my first baby. Like I just, you know what I mean?

Like that's, that's, that's. That's tough, I think, right?

**Joy:** Yeah, and there, I don't think there was this, like, day where I decided I just care so much less. Like, if anything, I think it was a super slow shift of making small hires, uh, bringing people on, like, a virtual assistant or, uh, a video editor or an SEO manager, like, just small roles, mostly contractors, and seeing what could be freed up of like my, on my own time and from my plate, but also like where we can get together.

That is like, that became more of my focus. I stopped getting so precious about the perfect, deliverable, or the perfectly formatted, like, is it done the way I would do it? Like, outcome, and then started seeing like, what was possible With a team and I think that's like if I if I think more about like, okay But where do I want to go?

Like do I want the blog post to be perfect? Or do I want to have like twice as much content and be impacting twice as many people? so Realizing like yeah, it's not gonna be the way you did it because you didn't do it But a lot of times that's just the details that you see no one can tell that it wasn't you inside of canva Or you making that final little tiny tweak in Lightroom.

I remember when I was outsourcing like weddings and stuff like that, it's the same way. It's, it's, it's hard to, to let go of these things. But a lot of times like the details that were so hung up on are not the details that like people see. And that's hard to acknowledge.

**Dan:** Oh, it's so hard to acknowledge. I actually wanted to, I'm curious about like the sort of the strategy that you had when you were going about hiring some team members and sort of expanding, because You know, that's, that's difficult.

So I'm curious about where you were able to say like, okay, these are the things I can give up. Like, did you make a list of like, okay, here's the things that like, I have the most impact in, here's the things that I want to have my hand in, here's the other things I can let go, or like, what did that sort of, Nitty gritty process look like?

**Joy:** Yeah, I tried to be strategic about it. Like I listened to podcasts and books and I thought like, okay, you have to make lists of like the things that you do and like where you're spending a lot of your time. And it's, it's been kind of a combination of a couple of things. It's been like, yeah, I like wrote down different tasks, but it was.

Mostly like the motivation behind some of those first hires, I think were things that I no longer enjoyed. And if I could have like an overlap with things I no longer enjoyed, but also brought me money, then it could make sense to outsource. And so I really just connected like, okay, I don't, I don't want to spend the majority of my week editing and you know when it was less editing sure but like I could be doing so much more especially when I was managing like the YouTube channel and the Facebook group and so many other things alongside of the editing and then realizing like I don't want to look at my face anymore when I'm editing videos like I'm tired of this like can I edit these videos yes I edited my first like 100 YouTube videos but it became this like mental block for me as to like why I wasn't publishing and I think if you can identify like What is the one I think it's like, um, like a domino effect Like if you could have one domino fall and like everything else would be smoother identify that domino and see if there's like an automation or a software or a



person that could come in and help you and For the editing for the videos That was a person.

So just making sure that like, if I could get rid of that, that helped me say, okay, well then I can, I can sit down and I can batch this and I can handle this. And it was the same with editing. I thought, you know, I can, I can do like the final hour of tweaking and making it, you know, something that I'm proud of, but if someone else could do the heavy lifting.

Then I can do other things in my business. I can do stylized shoots I can go to these networking events and I I just I can't be everything So I think that was kind of how I decided but also really just like watching what other people were Outsourcing and then thinking like do would that help me? How was how would that feel for me?

Because some people really enjoy certain things that I would outsource just that but also you implied it as well saying like Where you're most useful and at this point You In my business I have to look to like do like an 80 20 analysis of like what is bringing in the most money So like 20 of the activities are yielding 80 of your revenue So like really putting in on like what is moving the needle and then in those things What is stuff that only I can do?

Only I can actually sit down and record for my podcast. Like, I mean, until they develop all the AI and it thinks for me. But, like, only I can actually do that. But I don't technically have to, like, edit it. Like, I draft the original idea. Someone else can flesh out the blog post. And it's all of my, you know, like, my outline.

But, like, do I have to sit there and think about, The Yoast green light and all these things. No, like I really don't. And, and arguably it's not the best use of my time anymore.

**Dan:** It seems like on your path to sort of like continuing to grow and move forward and outsourcing people and stuff that like you said, there are like lots of things that influenced you and reading and podcasts and all that stuff.

Was it just a matter of sort of like. Tasting a bunch of different stuff. That's not the right word. I'm saying like, like just trying a bunch of different stuff out, like dipping your toe and be like, all right, well, this sort of works. This doesn't work. That's not for me. This works. I'm going to keep going here and just sort of like taking steps forward, right?

Like there's no, here's the path. I'm going to follow this. It's like, all right, well, I know what this next step is. Let me go to that. Here's this next step. Let me go to that. And just like sort of trying to keep going. Is that like, Is that sort of what I'm hearing and like a path to growth for you?

**Joy:** I I definitely believe that there isn't one path to success because you'll see Lots of people take lots of different paths and all end up at success with that being said though I think you need to define what success means to you Uh, because it can be really easy to Just be so caught up in like other people's finish lines and they look really good.

And if you're even just a few degrees off from your finish line, you can literally land in the wrong state, right? Like if you're in an airplane and you're just like, so I've definitely chased stuff that sounded like a good idea. And I do think there is a certain like trial and error, especially in content creation, especially when it comes to your visibility marketing and like kind of finding your voice.

In whatever it is that you're doing, I think figuring out a platform that fits you does take experimentation. Like, there's only a certain amount of thinking you can do before you have to take action. And like, cause action breeds that clarity. Like, when you take the action, you start to figure out, like, am I getting a little bit closer to that finish line?

Like, let's try. You know, long form content that looks like this, or let's try a long form content that looks like this. And I do think that like, it is kind of becoming a student of ourselves, but make sure you do it enough that you have the data to know whether or not it's a fit. Cause some people will say like I tried video or tried YouTube or, you know, fill in the blank, whatever.

I tried it and it didn't work. But like you come to find out like, They published a couple of times and they dropped off the map and then they published a couple of times they dropped off the map and it's like you didn't really get enough data points to really try it out. But yeah, I do think that there is a tremendous amount of trying things like really trying stuff and I, I've tried all sorts of different marketing tactics to get clients or to get published or, you know, lots of different things and that other people said worked for them and then it didn't work for me.

Um, so there is a certain like. You can take some really proven strategies and then they don't fit you, right? Um, so I think that like you do have to put it through a filter. Does this fit me? Does this fit my goals? Does this fit my voice and how I work? And then like, am I good at this? You know?

**Dan:** Right.

Cause if not, and it's necessity, you better give it to somebody else to do. Um, that's like a full transparency. That's like me with this podcast, right? Like it was not as, um, I was able to record it. I was able to like, basically edit it. But then afterwards I wasn't doing anything. And I was like, not posting consistently.

And that's where this amazing editor who's listening to this now, Haley, that's where she comes in and she's helping make it so much more easy for me to put my ideas out there. And then she like sort of takes it from there and, and I can, am free to do the next set of things. I think the thing you said about sort of like taking action, right?

Like we all have like these ideas and it's like paralysis by analysis. You're thinking about all the things you want to do and you've got all the ideas and then you have to like take action. But then the other part of that is. Let's like be reflective about the action. Like did this action work? Did it fit me?

Did like, I enjoy doing it because if not, then like move on. But I sort of, I'm like seeing a couple things that through our conversation now, like, uh, I'm sort of putting together like a one, two, three list of like what you would do if, if it was all taken away from you, right? Like you said, you had a website hacked and like all that stuff.

So in some senses you did have some things that were like, taken away from you. So I guess what I'm wondering is like, if, if it was all taken away from you tomorrow, and you had to start over again, completely from zero, where people didn't know your name either.

**Joy:** Yeah, it hurts. It hurts a little bit. I

**Dan:** know.

I know. Didn't know your name. Yeah. Yeah. What would, uh, What would you do for like the first 30 days? Like what would that look like for you to start like building that momentum again?

**Joy:** Yeah, this is such a good question. I think for me, this comes down to building brand authority and visibility. There's going to be a lot of like throwing spaghetti in certain contexts like we've talked about, but like you need the brand authority and you need visibility.

So I would make content. I would put on a content creators hat from the very beginning. Um, I would also collaborate with vendors and grow my portfolio, do a lot of collaborating. I think that like. It doesn't go out of style. It's kind of like you said, like this was relevant when I started, but I see it now and I see this in the lives of like all of my coaching clients and it just never goes out of style.

Um, I would also, I would start video from day one. Personally, I think a lot of people are not willing to do video. And that was actually one of the reasons I didn't say this before. That was one of the reasons I started on video because my brother pointed out that he was like, so many people, like, It's a little less saturated the harder it goes, like the harder the path, the little less crowded.

And so you'll notice that like if you're willing to do things that people are not willing to do, it actually gets a little less crowded and you'll stand out. Um, and I know that like video is intimidating, um, but nothing grows you faster or builds more trust with your audience than video. I think like audio is like second best.

So I'm like, let's just do both. Like, so I love that. I love that. I love that. Um, but I think like really thinking, like pushing yourself to, to see what's possible. Yeah. So for 30 days, I would challenge myself to like show up in new and stretching ways every day to build that brand authority and to build the visibility.

Um, that's what I do, like starting over.

**Dan:** that line in there. I was trying to write it down, but I didn't get it. But, um, I want to pull that out. It's such a good quote. I think it was like, if you're willing to do things that others aren't, it gets like less crowded, less saturated, which is such a succinct way of putting it.

Like, just do the thing, keep showing up and just, and other mindset piece that you said before that really stuck with me, which was like, I don't want to fail. I don't want to be another statistic. And that was something that is going to come out in my newsletter soon is like, just, When I first started out, there was, um, this book called *The E Myth Revisited, Why Small Businesses Fail*.

And it's like, everybody in that book will say, and the statistics still haven't changed, that, uh, businesses within the first five years, 50 percent of them fail, about. Uh, and then of that 50%, one in three fail by 10 years. So, I mean, 17 ish percent reach of businesses that start reach 10 years. And I was like, I don't want to be another statistic.

And that was part of the, like, reason why I got to, uh, you know, why I blew past 10 years, even though 10 years was 2020. That was tricky. Um, but still like that, that mindset, that grit, that persistence of not wanting to be another statistic or just wanting to keep pushing forward is, uh, It's a big part of it.

**Joy:** Yeah. Yeah. I like that summary. I, I heard something kind of similar in Prophet First where, um, I think it's Mike Michalowicz was saying that kind of he's. Talking about that statistic, but also kind of unpacking like the why and it's not for lack of talent. It's really it's not for For lack of you know, like oh you just didn't have what it takes It's really he he approaches it from like a financial model of paying yourself and that so many creative small business owners entrepreneurs are not paying themselves.

And so reading that, I was like, okay, I'm not going to be that person. I've got to figure it out. Like, so I, I think I like read this stuff and it's like a personal challenge to myself to like, not fail, to not be that person. So I definitely have tried at every point of business to like soak up whatever I could from the people who'd gone ahead and then shared what worked and what didn't so as to avoid that failure.

But failure is also unavoidable to a certain extent. That

**Dan:** is for sure. Lots of failing. Um, personal challenge like that one been working on a lot of personal challenges lately. Okay, so on that joy, I feel like, uh, that was so many nuggets in there. And like, you know, I know people often talk about mindset as being like this woo woo thing, um, but it is massively underestimated.

And I love that that has been such a big part of your growth, uh, over the last couple of years of, you know, that was a theme that I saw through all the things that you talked about and a lot of things I see on your blog. Um, and I'm so thankful that you got to share a little bit about that with us. So As we sort of, like, wrap up here, uh, can you share a little bit about, like, where people can find you and how they can work with you and, like, all that kind of stuff?

**Joy:** Yeah, well, thank you so much. This has been so cool. Um, okay, so my website is joymichelle. co. I have the Photoboss Facebook group and the Photoboss courses and coaching and all of that over on Facebook. And, um, for anybody who wants to listen to the podcast, it's free. It's called To Both and that's on all major podcast players.

And then of course the YouTube channel, just search Joy Michelle Photography and like 200 videos will pop up on all things photography. Even some videos like following me around at like real weddings and some really cool behind the scenes stuff.

**Dan:** Interesting. Very cool. Thank you so much for being here and just being so open and vulnerable and sharing a little bit of your story with us.

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

Thanks again, and I'll see you in the next episode.