Hey, you're listening to the Call to both podcast. I'm your host, joy Michelle, and I am here to share all about the year of 2025. It has been one of the fullest, hardest and most incredible years of my business, and honestly in my life as well. I saw a lot of wins, things that I'm proud of, faced, really difficult moments, things that tested me, and I learned a lot of lessons that I will be carrying forward into 2026.

And today in this episode. I wanna share all of that here with you. I wanna talk about what really worked well. What are some things I tested? What are some things that fell flat? Things that I used to do that worked well at one point that are no longer working and what I'm gonna do about it next and just what is gonna be different in the coming year.

And I wanna invite you to think about your own business as I share about mine. So take this time to really reflect on the year that you had. So if you have a notebook handy, definitely grab one. This isn't just for me to share about the year that I had. I think this is also a really cool chance for you to pause and reflect on yours as well.

And as the CEO of your business, taking time at the end of the year to sit down and review how things went is just one of the most powerful practices that you can have as the CEO. It's not always easy to take the time, and it can, sometimes it can be a little uncomfortable to face some of that data and really look at where the year went.

Where did you fall short? Where did we exceed goals? Where did we forget we even had the goal? But. At the end of the day, I think it's really worthwhile. I've grown to love this time in my business and I wanna share a little bit more about that. In this episode, you're listening to Call to both the podcast for ambitious women chasing both business dreams and little ones.

I'm your host. Join Michelle. I'm a wedding photographer, turned business coach and founder of Photo Bos. 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 both journey.

I feel like this year. Has been such a called to both coded year for me. I gave birth to my third baby this year. I took a three month maternity leave that I had to fully plan for and prepare for just like so much prep that went into that. I homeschooled my oldest child and kept a company growing and running.

During it all, very called to, both just felt like I was living it and breathing it and at times drowning in it. Like if I'm honest, I I, at times I felt like, wow, this is a lot. This is a lot. And it is a lot. It is. So I wanna share a little bit more about that because I think that's just like the, the honest reality that.

We don't always share as moms and as women, running businesses and companies, uh, that it, it is a lot and sometimes you're flying high and sometimes you are not. So this past weekend, this is all very top of mind for me because this past weekend I took some time to have my CEO review time in my business, and I do this.

Every year. It is a process that I have really refined. I love this time. I look forward to it every single year, and I spend the night away. I ordered DoorDash. I just like hung around in my pajamas and ate really good food and just dug into the numbers and reflected on the year that I just had in my business.

And I think this is such an important time for so many reasons, but I just, I recommend this if you haven't done this before and like really taken some time. Towards the end of the year, or really you could do this at the beginning of the year as well. Like at any point in January, just carve out the time, like make it fun, make it special, order the food, have a do it with a friend if you feel like you're still gonna be able to get stuff done.

But like, take the time because we work so hard and it, it is in part a review and it is in part a celebration. I felt like I was celebrating this year just to like give myself that time felt like. A reward for the year that I had. So I really recommend doing this. It's just a really cool experience. So when you're able to take that time to review back on things that happened a year prior.

You're just gonna be reminded of so many things that you've built, that you worked on, that you navigated, and it's going to make the decisions about the next year so much more informed. So after I do my review, after I get into the numbers and I review a lot of the details. Of the year that I just had, I then move into goal setting and decision making and all of that and what's ahead.

So I, I would love to share a few things that I did this year that I think worked really well for me. So I wanna start with a few wins that I experienced in my

business, and then I'll just. Be candid about some things that didn't work. Okay, so let's start with the wins. So some things that I feel like really moved the needle for me this year.

You, you know, with the context of like, coming into this year already pregnant, I had my baby in April, so. Really I was rolling like full roster of clients coming into this year. Really my focus was keeping the revenue high because I needed to take a paid 12 week maternity leave, and that was really important to me.

Um, batching content so that I could leave and things would still happen. I wanted this podcast to still have content for you guys. I wanted the blog to still remain active. Um, I just didn't want everything to go completely quiet during my maternity leave, even though in a lot of ways other platforms did go quieter, this was important to me.

So just with that context, I had a lot on my plate and so I've took the foot off of the gas in some of my marketing channels this year and. Leaned into others. And so one thing that I actually leaned into heavily this year was Instagram stories. And I used Instagram stories for documenting, for sharing, for soft selling, for hard selling, and for generating more messages.

So using dms to actually nurture relationships and leads was something that I really leaned into this year. And I feel like this worked so beautifully because. I like am naturally somebody who is going to chat with you in the dms, like that's just who I am. I will answer every message. If I've ever not responded to you, please message me again because it probably is in my requests or I didn't see it like it's, I answer my dms.

I just love connecting with people. And so it's a low lift. It feels very easy. It felt natural, and it was something that I feel like worked really well. Um, and as I was reviewing the numbers, I feel like there was definitely this connection between clients and people who decided to join my programs or people who decided to work with me in the coaching world and Instagram stories.

So I think that worked really well for me. That's definitely something I'm gonna keep working with, keep, keep in my strategy for next year. We also made some client experience improvements this year, so I feel like I really dialed in the onboarding experience when I'm working with a one-to-one coaching client.

I made our portal, so I have these custom client portals for each of my coaching clients. When we work together, all of our calls go in the portal, the recordings,

the organization of like, what are the next steps, what are the resources that were mentioned? I mean, it's a really cool thing. It's like a little mini.

Custom website page for my clients and this, I feel that we made this better than ever this year and it just helped my clients to feel more cared for. It removed any kind of confusion around like, what am I supposed to be working on? What's the best way for me to book my next call? Like really connected the dots, I feel like, in a way that I had not.

Like taking that final, like 5% for my client experience. And I, I'm really glad I did that and I feel like it was a, a really good payoff. One thing I continued to do, um, that worked really beautifully was discovery calls on Zoom. So like really connecting with people and letting people talk to me without having to pay for it.

And this is something that I have not always done in my business. I've had times in my business where I didn't have. Discovery calls. I didn't have these just like open times, almost like office hours where someone could jump on and say like, Hey, I'm interested in like, hearing more about like either your digital programs or maybe some one-on-one coaching or, you know, whatever it is.

Um, and there just wasn't a way to do that without like emailing me and whatever. So that's something that I continued to. Cre, like have and have available, except of course, during my maternity leave. So that's something that I did this year and I, I think that it just like simplified my sales process so much.

Really helped me like connect more with potential clients. And those conversations are so good. Like if you're considering a new offer in your business, even. Or you want to sell more of your current offer, having your calendar be so accessible, so easily accessible is an option. Like is something that I would say you should think about that you should have that as an option for people, because even when people don't necessarily book you, because I'm, I'm not gonna book every single person I talk to.

It is such a valuable market research and I have gotten so much more clarity on exactly who I'm helping and like what words to use because I'm literally talking to people all the time. I feel like so much more connected to the creatives in my audience in a way that I didn't at the beginning of the year, so.

That really worked. Something else that worked. Tracking my leads in a Google sheet. It's simple. It is not exciting, but it is so impactful. It made follow-ups more consistent. It really helped me to like spot trends in my business and see

what leads were actually working and what were not. Maternity leave, 12 weeks paid.

This was just, I feel like a little bit of both a personal and a professional win for me. I was able to truly step away and just trust that like my paycheck is gonna keep coming every two weeks, that the business is gonna keep rolling, that the systems and content that were created we're going to keep serving you guys.

And that was just. Like a really cool thing to see. So I did give myself a pat on the back when I was sitting in my CEO time. I was like, that happened and that was really cool and I'm really proud of myself. And then another thing that I've continued to do this year that has worked really well for me is blocking.

I am still creating long form search driven content. And this is more of a long-term strategy, but I think this is so important for the credibility of your website for Google to see what you're doing, even for generative search. So like AI type search, you know, chat. And, um, chat, GBT and Grok and like all the other chat searches, I am starting to see more leads come into my world through chat, GBT and that is really, really interesting.

It's something that I would like to talk about here more on the podcast next year, because this is, it's happening, it's, it's right in front of us. I know a lot of you guys are getting chat GPT leads and a lot of you are probably thinking this is something you need to be thinking about and a big way. To start ranking on chat GBT.

I mean, this is a big topic, but having more content for chat GBT to see and index is a big piece of that. And I think because I've stuck with blogging, I've been able to continue to see that work out really, really well. Okay. A few things that didn't work though, like I'm gonna be really honest with you.

Not everything went smoothly and I think it's, it can be really helpful and encouraging to hear like. Other entrepreneurs just like be real about what didn't work. Okay, so a couple things that didn't work. I stopped being so consistent about tracking my time and I felt like this really did not serve me well and I'm not even sure when it happened.

I think I was. In a weird, ironic way, I felt so rushed at times to like try to do what I was trying to do, especially before my maternity leave, that I just felt like I didn't have time to track my time. I realized this is ridiculous, but because of that, I sometimes like really wasn't consistent about my schedule, about leaning

into my themes of my work days, about starting with the most important things or even reflecting and saying.

You know, what are we spending time on? Does this make the most sense? Like really being able to look back with true numbers, not just feelings about how you're spending time in your business. That's a really helpful thing. And I completely lost that because I stopped tracking my time. So that was something I was like, darn it, I shouldn't have stopped.

I definitely stopped posting consistently to my Instagram feed, and while this was somewhat of a deliberate choice, it's something that did not work. Like my engagement has dipped. I think this is like. Don't, don't do this. Like I know better. I probably just should have created a better system or gotten a team member to figure this out.

And it's looking back, I'm like, hmm, yeah. If I could go back to January, 2025, joy and be like, Hey, so here's. Here's what we're gonna see at the end of the year. Don't spend as much time here. Don't think about Pinterest. Stop looking at your Facebook group and look at your Instagram feed. That's what I would tell myself and everything, you know, hindsight's 2020, but truthfully, I don't think that worked well for me.

I think that would've been time well spent, so I should have really leaned into that. Another thing that didn't work. Uh, presenting too many options. On my sales calls, uh, I realized that this was producing overwhelm and when clients are overwhelmed, they are not making decisions. Less is more, like less is so much better.

Simple is better, clear and simple. We do not need to. Overwhelm with optionality. A lot of times you presenting so many options to your clients is not actually helping them and doesn't make them feel empowered or sure, or confident to make that decision and thus could be costing you sales. And I noticed this in, in my own experience, like I have tested so much on how I'm presenting my offers and how I'm.

Showing up on my discovery calls, and this is something that I'm like, Hmm, I definitely had too many options because I have seen a huge difference when presenting less so less is more. And then I hinted at this a little bit, but my Facebook group, uh, this isn't, hasn't been working out super great for me.

And by working out, I mean, I don't think it is a big revenue generator. Um, I think it's, you know, maybe it's. Serving for some community. Maybe it's

serving as like a credibility piece, I guess you could say, but right now it's truthfully kind of on a chopping block for me mentally because I'm just trying to figure out like what direction to take it.

And just looking at the next year, I have to be really selective with what I'm choosing to focus on in terms of like a marketing channel. And right now the Facebook group, because of a lot of changes on the algorithm side, I think. Is just not doing anything for me. Like I hope it's serving the people in the group.

I don't even think it's, it's doing as much as it used to. Um, but I know from what I see in my numbers and what's happening when I look at data is that the Facebook group is not a part of conversion for me. It's not a part of the sale at all. I think the Facebook group could just go away and my business would not even notice financially.

Um, and so for that reason. That's something I feel like is not really working. Facebook groups have had like. You know, their heyday. Um, I think, and a big, a big shift happened, I think it was in 2024 meta announced some, some changes with the reach of Facebook groups. A lot of things have changed and I have noticed a huge.

Shift in engagement. I mean, just a lot. We could get into that, but it's something that has shifted quietly behind the scenes and it's something I'm still deciding on for Worn as an app for business professionals that provides instant identity verification and risk assessment. Helping you better understand who you're meeting with before any face-to-face interactions.

And for professionals like photographers who often meet with clients in their private homes or in unfamiliar locations, this is a super powerful tool. Many of us go into sessions. With little to no verified information about the person on the other side, and that is where forewarn comes in with just a phone number.

You can verify a prospect's identity and view public record information like property ownership and criminal history. This helps you confirm that the details they've shared are accurate and gives you valuable information to help you stay safe. I have given fore worn a try myself, and it truly gives me peace of mind.

So before you head into any one-on-one appointment with a new client, take a couple seconds and run their phone number through the forewarn app. It gives you context, is the person who they say they are. Are there any red flags that I should maybe know about? It's quick, it's easy, and it gives you confidence.

Heading into any shoot or meeting, visit for worn.com to learn more and start protecting yourself today. Okay, so highs like moments throughout the year that were just like absolute highs for me. Um, I have a few that I wanna share with you. So launching my new course Affiliate Boss, that was a big high, I think it had just been a minute since I have put a new offer like that out into the world and like.

Seeing it come together, watching those first couple of clients like enroll, getting the emails of like, this person joined, this person joined and getting to get like feedback from some of these people in my dms being like, oh my gosh, I just signed up for Amazon affiliate. Oh, I just got approved over here and I'm getting affiliate income from this other company.

Like, I didn't even think about this way to make, it's just really cool. It was cool and it, it really reminded me that like the hard work of a course can truly pay off. That was a very gratifying moment 'cause that was a lot of work and I built that course 100% while I was pregnant with Wesley. And that is not easy, like.

You know, the exhaustion of pregnancy, the, just everything that I had to get into the world and get together. I, I had like almost forgotten how much work is involved in building a course, like building, launching, selling. It's like each of those is its own thing. Um, but I think I've really had forgotten and it, it really felt like a gratifying moment.

I talked about maternity leave. Taking those 12 paid weeks was a really cool win. And. Honestly, when I think about the highs of 2025, I also feel like my clients' wins are so top of mind for me. Like truly seeing my clients like sell out their sessions, become fully booked, raise their prices, and continue to be booked at those prices.

Launch passive income offers, build aligned brands like pay themselves in a way that truly impacted their families. Those wins. Were like, it felt like my own wins, and I like that. That's just a gratifying thing. And then like a high and a low, it's kind of interesting. So like another high was like getting back to business after my maternity leave.

So coming back to business after taking three months off, I felt resistance around leaving my baby. Even for short periods of time. I felt resistance around using my voice again, feeling like. Okay, who am I coming back as it is a reinvention of yourself, like every time you have a child, I feel like you really reinvent yourself.

You decide like, which parts of me am I keeping? Like it's a rebirth of you as a woman as well, but just like seeing everything come back I think was a, was a win like a high, it was a top moment for me to be like seeing, coming back to the business and being like booking that client, booking clients again, seeing revenue come in.

It just like reminded me that like. The business is resilient and I am resilient and I have these systems and like it wasn't it, it didn't ruin anything to leave like I could, I could take those three months. So those were some highs, but we do also have some lows. And what's interesting is one of my lows is also coming back from maternity leave because it felt like a lot of resistance, like I said, and at times I really feel like I just wanted to like throw the whole thing out.

Because I just, I had to make a lot of decisions and I had to make a lot of decisions and carry through without sleeping through the night, without feeling fully adjusted to like my life and my schedule and my body. And I really had to learn a lesson that I am still learning. And that is that patience and perspective matter so much more and to keep taking action even when you don't.

Really have full certainty. And so there was about a month there where I was like, I was back in the business. I had my part-time hours again, I had my childcare, I was working, I was in it. But I just felt like things weren't clicking. Like I was like, what? What's going on? Like, where is everybody? And it was, you know, the end of summer, I think everybody was still like transitioning back to school.

But on my side I'm wondering like, okay, why can I not just like say the word and my roster is full? And I, little did, I know I really needed to just stick with it for four more weeks until October and then in October I would have my best month. Like, but at the time I really felt like I had some of these moments where I was like, man, like what?

Did I mess this up? Did I leave for too long? Man, I didn't think 12 weeks was gonna be that crazy. It's like you start thinking. What have I done? May, maybe the business, maybe I'm a, has been maybe like, I don't, I'm not gonna do this anymore. And so September itself was just a low, it was one of my lower income months in my business for this year, and it was just like a humbling thing to feel.

Shaken a little bit, like unsure, come back and you're like, just not sure. You know, it's stressful. It's stressful when you're doing the thing and you're going through the motions and it's not happening. And you, I, I know everybody

listening to it. Like you, you get that, like, you get that feeling of like, you put something out into the world and it didn't go the way that you wanted.

And that's how all of September felt. And I think that like another low was just ramping. Back up in the business with limited support. Very, very limited support. So limited childcare, limited team, like just my team is very lean, but at the time I, I didn't have a va. Just lots of lessons. Lots of lessons to be learned there, but I think that these lows just reminded me that like.

Growth is not linear and it does not have to be linear in order to still be a successful year overall, like you really are gonna see those, like if you charted this on a, a graph, you're gonna see like up and then down and then up, up, up. And you're like, oh my gosh, we're trending up. And then it's like down and then flat, flat up, up and it, it's just, it's a, it's such a mind game.

And like that is entrepreneurship. That is entrepreneurship. Okay. So in, in wrapping this up, I wanna share a few lessons that I'm gonna be taking into next year. Um, I wanna share a little bit about what I am doing next year, um, like a couple of new things happening, what I'm committing to, what I'm leaving behind, things like that.

And then I just have some final wrap up thoughts for you as you reflect on your year in your business. So, lessons that I'm taking into 2026. Number one, simplify sooner. Overwhelm slows momentum. It slows it for your clients, confuses them, and it slows it for you. Simplify, simplify, simplify. Number two, your consistency matters and is not just about showing up on social media.

I think it's your consistency in the way that you track your leads. Yes, in content, but also in showing up even when you can't make it perfect. Showing up even when you're not a hundred percent sure, even when you're not sure that anyone's gonna see it, or that the offer's gonna land. That consistency matters and it just being back in the trenches this year of a new offer coming out into the world and coming back from maternity leave and feeling unsure has just reminded me of the importance of that consistency and that it does really pay off.

It does matter, and it does pay off. So number three, your business can survive your absence. That's a lesson I learned and I want you to know too, your business can survive your absence systems and preparation to get yourself outta the business for a short or long amount of time. Really do pay off and it is possible and it can give you the freedom to step back from your business.

Lesson number four, you gotta celebrate the wins, and you have to also process those lows. I tend to stick more into like future, future vision, future excitement. Like let's build to the next thing. Let's strategize, right? Like, I'm such an Enneagram three, but I, I realized that it's also really, really important that we talk about some of the hard stuff that we process, the lows that we're experiencing in business too, and.

That kind of leads me into number five. Lesson number five is that investing in support is so important, and I think investing in the right support is also going to help you process those lows and remind you to celebrate the wins as well. The right team is gonna make your growth more sustainable. So we're talking about support here.

But also I think friends around you, coaches, supportive professionals of all kinds can really help you to just have a sounding board. I think, I don't know that I would've gotten through this year without my friends, like, without just my people on Voxer to go to every day and just be like, I don't know what's going on.

Like, are you seeing this? Um, am I crazy? Like if you don't have your coaches, your friends, your board of directors in your corner. I mean, I don't, I don't know how you're doing it. Like I truly, this is essential. Um, this is like what's getting me through all of this year and how I know that like I'm gonna be able to weather the ups and the downs of next year.

So like, invest in support. Looking forward to the next year. Okay, so what's coming up? So first I will be hiring another VA again to my team. So building out support, even more so in my businesses is like my, I, I don't have a word for next year, but something that just keeps coming up for me is like, I want to be resourced.

I want to be well resourced, I need to get supported. Um, that means like in the home, it means with my kids. It's like in my homeschooling journey, in my health journey, my fitness journey, like I. Just wanna be resourced. And one thing that's coming up for me right now is I'm, I'm expanding my team. The other thing is I'm committing to really aligned content and consistent content, and I'm like, drum roll please.

I am coming back to YouTube. Ah. Which is like scary to say because I'm like, I have to do it now. I have to come back. But I'm excited, like I feel like YouTube is like my roots. It's my stomping ground. It's, it's kind of like coming home. So. The YouTube channel will be coming back in 2026, so keep an eye out for that.

Um, other things that are happening next year, so I'm gonna continue to refine my one-to-one coaching programs. Just putting all of my effort into those and going all in on my one-to-one coaching and my digital offers. That's a big focus for me, is one focus. I feel like it's, it's like a play on words.

Like my focus is to stay focused. I tend to have a lot of ideas and I don't wanna dilute myself next year. And so being really well resourced and really hyper-focused, those are like two really big things for me right now. And yeah, and just showing up really intentionally. I feel like I just wanna show up intentionally in this call to both journey in like having a family and my business and in my creativity.

Um, and I do have an episode coming up about creativity and just getting back to creating content that you enjoy. In particular, creating, playing, like experimenting, be being able to show up as a, like a whole creative person instead of feeling like you have to do it a certain way, the way that you've always done it in the past, or the way that other people expect you to do it, or the way she's doing it over there.

So anyway, I have a whole episode coming out on that soon. But I would really want to just take this moment and encourage you to take some time to do this. Like do your own creative review in your business. Take carve out some time, order yourself some food. Reflect on the year that you had, make a, like, pull out a shade of paper and do literally just go through the episode, be highs, lows, wins, lessons.

Um, it's just, it's such a powerful exercise and I think. It's going to help you to be able to set your goals for 2026 with so much more intentionality. Okay, so to wrap all of this up, whew. What a year. I am really, really grateful for this year. I feel like I lived a lot of lives this year and I am truly, truly pumped for next year.

Like I'm sure you know, everyone's like, oh, this is my year, best year ever. I really, really feel like a, a renewed. Excitement in my business, or renewed clarity. I'm just excited and I'm, I'm, I'm so grateful that you're here on this journey. So take out a notebook, jot down some reflections about your business.

Really don't overthink this. Make sure you celebrate what went well, face what didn't, and set some intentions for it the next year. Thank you so much for listening. Guys, seriously, thank you. Thank you for being here. If you listen to one episode this year, if you listen to 20 or 30 or all of them, I truly feel so, so grateful to have you here along on this journey, and I am so excited to step into 2026 with you all here and to bring even more.

Called to both content to this podcast and I truly feel like the best is yet to come.

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.