

So, Here's the Thing Episode 121 Transcript

Laylee Emadi

Welcome to so here's the thing, the podcast for small business owners, entrepreneurs and creative educators who are ready to take their business to the next level, through candid conversations, tactical approaches and a few unpopular opinions. We're lifting the veil on what it takes to build both a life and a business that you love. I'm your host Layli Ahmadi, a coach for creatives and founder of the creative educator Academy, where I help entrepreneurs step into the role of industry leaders and educators. I'm so glad that you're here. Now let's jump into today's episode. Hey, friends, welcome back to the show. Today we're doing something a little fun and a little different. We are recapping the creative educator conference. But instead of me taking you guys through kind of my experience from beginning to end because I found that to be extremely overwhelming. I have invited Haylee Gaffin of Gaffin creative to come on the show and actually interview me about things that she thought were interesting about the conference so that I could recap for you guys. And hopefully just hit all the things that you want to hear about. Haylee was one of our amazing sponsors. She's also my Podcast Producer. So if you guys are listening, and you are a speaker, or creative educator who wants to start a podcast, you've got to check out Gaffin creative, she's got lots of great resources for up and coming podcasters as well as an agency that produces amazing podcasts like the one that you're listening to, if I do say so myself, it wouldn't have gotten here without Haylee. So I'm excited to have her on the show. Okay, I am turning the mic over to you, you are in charge. And I'm excited to talk about all the things that you have planned.

Haylee Gaffin

Awesome, thank you so much for allowing me to kind of take this side of the podcasting space on so here's the thing. First of all, I just want to congratulate you on how amazing the conference went because as a sponsor, but also just like seeing it through the eyes of attendees, you crushed it. Like, let's just start there. Thank you. I feel like conference hosts don't get enough credit for all the work they put into it. And like I did see some of the work beforehand. But then like when I got there, I was blown away. And I think most of the attendees were as well. So speaking of the conference, I would love to have you share kind of what inspired the conference and why you really chose a conference as the next step in your offerings for creative educators.

Laylee Emadi

Oh, thank you so much for all the kind words, first of all, it was it was really such a labor of love. The inspiration for the conference was really there for years and years before we even started before I even like, put pen to paper and decided like, Okay, I'm going to do it this January like it's happening. I wanted to do a live component to the creative educator Academy back in 2019, when I first launched, and it was going to be in 2020. Well, clearly, that wasn't gonna happen. So I really I'd never let go of the dream. But I did kind of like temporarily let it go. And we did a virtual which you were a big part of we did a virtual conference for general, like creative entrepreneurs in 2021. Right, was that 2021?

Haylee Gaffin

Honestly, yeah, I think it was because, gosh, that feels like so long ago. But that was not that long ago.

Laylee Emadi

I know. But it feels like forever. And so doing the first virtual conference, I think was a really big eye opener for me of what I knew it was lacking. And what I need and what kind of motivates me is getting in person with people and getting face to face with people. And really having people invest their time and their energy all into like one space. And so that was kind of the inspiration was just, I always wanted to do something live. I've done retreats and workshops for years, which you know, you've been to some of my retreats. And I just like there's nothing like it. For me personally, nothing gives me as much joy and as much, I guess, return as being able to get in room with amazing people. And like see so many light bulbs go off at the same time. It's so cool.

Haylee Gaffin

Yeah, I do love that I think in person does allow for so much more connection as well, like you and I met at a conference. And while we didn't connect immediately, the next conference I went to, I was like, oh, Laylee's gonna be there. And then we connected and it was like, you know, the start of a beautiful friendship and working relationship and all the things so, yeah, I really, I really love that. And now I know this is going to be a huge question that a lot of educators because you are a conference for educators, the educators are going to ask, how did you go about choosing your speakers?

Laylee Emadi

Yeah, I will spill all the tea here because I know everybody wants it honestly, like you guys who are listening. You know, some of you guys have already been in my DMs like how do I get on the stage like how do I get in this room? And it was really tricky. It was honestly one of the hardest things about putting the conference on was selecting the speaker lineup. Because having it one, the pressure of having it be by an educator for educators, it's like always a little bit more pressure, because you really want to deliver the best of the best to our like, even in the first year, we had so many applicants, and a lot of them were incredible, a lot of them are close friends of mine. And so the selection process was really hard, because I'm selecting from a group that should actually be attendees as well. And so that's always a little tricky, because it's like, well, you need to come. But also, I don't know if really, it's like the right fit for you to be on stage. So speaker selection for me, a lot of it came down to the topic. That was a huge obviously, that was like number one for me was I knew the topics that I wanted to be taught about, and I knew the topics that educators needed to be learning on. And so that really helps because a lot of people who applied maybe they didn't put in like a topic that was relevant to educators. Because again, you got to think like when I say creative educators, there are people on stage who want to be teaching to their niche industry. Well, their niche industry is not general educator. So it's like, it really helped narrow down the selection process by who is tailoring their actual topic, to the conference and to the audience, which is something I teach my speaking coaching clients all the time. And if you don't do that, that's like an easy, an easy, no, you know what I mean? And then if they got the topic, and the topic was perfect. From there, it was kind of just putting the puzzle pieces together a personality type of teaching style is the teaching style aligned with what I want for my audience for the attendees. And then of course, as you know, diversity and inclusivity are extremely important to me in all aspects. And again, that even includes teaching style as well. So like making sure that all of the bases were covered, so that every attendee felt really represented, really seen really valued, and they could learn well from each speaker. So that was kind of long winded, but I hope that it helps anybody who's like, how do I get on this stage?

Haylee Gaffin

Yeah, I think it's important because as a lot of potential applicants for speaking, come about and come across your application, when you open them, I think it's important that they do take that to heart of like,

they need to tailor it to educators, if you're a wedding photographer, educating other wedding photographers on how to market X, Y, and Z in your business, that's not going to be as relevant to all of these educators, you're not teaching marketing to wedding photographers, you are teaching it to educators, and they need to make sure that their pitch topic, and their own knowledge aligns with that. So I'm glad you shared that. The other thing I wanted to ask you about, though, is do you have any specific advice for speakers who are excited to apply next year?

Laylee Emadi

Yeah, I mean, first off, I would say, as much as I love hearing from you guys, on anything in the podcast, like, please feel free to DM me, please don't DM me pitches, it's so so hard for me to keep track of them. And like I said, we already had so many applicants for last year, I can only imagine how many we're gonna get for this year. And I would encourage everybody to apply when an application is out. So I would say join the newsletter, turn on notifications over on Instagram, which I never do, I hate doing that. But if I'm looking for something that's like timed, it might be worth it. So you know, just keep an eye out, I promise to share when applications are out and then follow that application protocol. And really put some time and thought into the application. Make sure that you're filling it out like you would an old school. I mean, honestly, I hate to say it, but like an old school job application, not like a new school Diem pitch. Like I just think there's such a big difference in professionalism. So just kind of put a lot of thought into it. Give it the time that it deserves. And, and just know, this is this is so hard for me as somebody who coaches speakers and wants everybody to get on a stage. There are only a small number of speakers who get selected for any live event. And usually there's like, you know, 50 times the applicants. So it's a numbers game. It's not personal. Go into it, take your feelings out of it and just give it your best shot.

Haylee Gaffin

Yeah, I love that. Now, as a sponsor of the conference, I do want to highlight this because I know there are other sponsors out there listening who are like, Okay, I missed out on this conference. I screwed up because you did. Hopefully I can say that here. But sponsors are kind of key for helping conferences kind of be established as a successful conference because they provide monetary support support in so many different ways to a conference for building a better experience for the attendees. What are you looking for in sponsors for next year? What types of sponsors are you looking for? And who? Who do you want to hear from? Because I know they're out there and they want to talk to you about sponsoring?

Laylee Emadi

Oh, I love this question. And I'm so glad I had to come on here. It's just so fun to have somebody who was like actually there with me as a sponsor and just as a participant of the of the conference. But, you know, I chose every sponsor this year based off of people who I have known companies that I know companies that have a good relationship with companies whose values align with my own values. Every single sponsor in attendance was very much in alignment with my mission. My values are the heart behind the conference, and really just like the same energy, good energy, good people, and highly Lake, ethical, amazing companies, we had show it sponsor, they were incredible. They brought so much joy, and so much excitement and enthusiasm. The guys that they sent to this like primarily female conference, were amazing. I loved love loved having show it there, we had tagged the abundance group, Ashley Ebert, she came with Kayla, they were amazing. They even Kayla even took the stage for a few minutes. And it was so moving and amazing. Obviously, you Gaffin creative was there. My own podcast production company, like, again, these are companies that I have really great

relationships with the legal Page, who I use in my business every single day. Although she wasn't there in person, she was a sponsor, and we so so appreciate, appreciate her. And then of course, we had HoneyBook, who I have had a long standing relationship with and have been really, really excited to have as part of my business from day one. So that was really special. They sponsored our happy hour. And also we had Katie Chen, who's in charge of the HoneyBook educator program, come and speak and be able to share really amazing knowledge. So all of our sponsors, were really honestly so helpful to every attendee. So I guess that's what I'm looking for. I'm looking for sponsors, who actually can serve my attendees, who the audience is a good fit to become basically customers of the sponsors that should be mutually beneficial. So that's what we look for. And also just like I said, I look for sponsors who align with our, with our values. And then of course, we have vendor sponsors, as well. We had Sarah and design who did all the design work. We had Elaine love paper, who did our amazing signage, and then we had our love floral, local Dallas, amazing wedding, an event florist who just blew it out of the water. I mean, it was beautiful.

Haylee Gaffin

Awesome. I know that potential sponsors are likely wondering what the experience was like from a sponsors perspective. And even some attendees may be curious as to like, why sponsors are sponsoring and how they approach it. And I do think I as I am a smaller business, so I'm, I'm not the like hundreds and hundreds of customers and clients. Why would I want to sponsor I think, a huge thing that drew me to the creative educator conference. One was you obviously we have a great working relationship. And I know you put on such amazing events because I have attended them as an attendee. But one of the biggest things that drew me to it was the size. And I know that's not always going to be the case for every business out there. But I loved being able to connect one on one with almost every single attendee like I know, at some point, I had to have talked to every single person. And there were like three or four people that I did not connect with during the conference that day. But in the like, late night hangouts in the lobby, I was able to talk to people and I really, really love that. And being able to like not just be a vendor that someone walks by, and they're like, I don't want to talk to them. Every single attendee, it was like, when there were breaks, they all came flocking to the vendor area, because they were one curious about what we did. But you also gave us a lot of shout outs, which I appreciated. So I think it is important for those potential sponsors to hear that, and not only for me as your Podcast Producer, but other businesses. So I did while we were there, I interviewed Ashley and Kayla, and had them kind of share their thoughts. So I'll play that now.

Ashley

Hey, there we are Ashley and Kayla from the abundance group. And we help people build their teams and we are hanging out at the creative Educators Conference.

Kayla

Hey, so Ashley, I want to ask you, if you could give other entrepreneurs one piece of advice, what would it be?

Ashley

I mean, if y'all know us, it's of course start a team. I think a lot of people think hey, I don't know if a team is right for me that feels overwhelming. Hey, I had a really bad boss. I don't want to do that. But obviously we know teams can bring so much joy and abundance to your business. So if you are worried about it or thinking about it, we think teams is a huge way to change your business and K Lola, what has been your favorite part of the creative Educators Conference?

Kayla

Favorite part? Is that's such a mean question. Because if I have anything, I have my favorites, I will tell you though, for sure one of the best parts about this is just making new friends, just hearing people's journey and how far they've come and watching them really realize just how incredible they are, and just how well positioned they are to make such a big impact in their community. It's really, really fun. And it's been really awesome to

Ashley

be here. Yeah. and Laylee puts together some of the most incredible people and we're just honored to be a part of it. Absolutely.

Haylee Gaffin

All right. Now from an organizational perspective, how did the actual execution of the conference go?

Laylee Emadi

Honestly, it went better than I could have ever anticipated or hoped for I, you know, I did the majority of the planning myself, and I was lucky enough to have a staff of amazing volunteers. And also like I, you know, I brought in an assistant and that was really helpful. But I was really blown away honestly, by how everything came together. And I think that's a testament of the speakers, I brought in their professionalism, my sponsors who were willing to lend a helping hand, and all of the staff that was willing to just like, put everything into making it an amazing experience for every attendee,

Haylee Gaffin

that's amazing. Well, I knew that you would make an impact. So I actually asked a few attendees, both about what they were loving about the conference, and what impact you had made on their journey. So I'm gonna let the audience listen to those.

Akua Konadu

Hey, y'all. It is Akua konadu. Here, storytelling strategist, social media educator, and one of the speakers at the conference. And this has truly been amazing and so much fun these past few days. And one thing that I have loved about Layli in this conference is that she set the standard of what a conference should be the amazing diversity in the speakers in our audience. And for me, as a woman of color, it has just been so amazing to see how she has been super intentional in making sure that every single person is seen and included, that barriers are removed to make sure that people are able to get the education that they need to be able to further their business. And honestly other conferences, y'all need to take notes seriously. It has been such a fulfilling, and amazing two days to be with so many other people and educators in this room. So I hope she does it again. I'm just kidding. I know she'll do it again. And definitely don't want to miss out this this next time around. So thanks, Laylee.

Victoria

Hi, my name is Victoria Rayburn and I am the chief brand evangelist for treefrog. Marketing. We are a marketing agency for small businesses. And Oh, guys, there are just so many wonderful things that I could say about Laylee. But years and years ago, Wally was actually the one to inspire me to become an educator. That was not something that was really on my radar. But hearing her speak at another conference is really, really spoke to me it was she's just she is just amazing. I would also say that my favorite part about the creative educator conference has to be the community, but not just the fact that

everybody is super nice. It has been really just truly amazing to be in a room of people who are passionate about educating others. It's an amazing thing to be in a room of people who want to serve others help others. And it's also really cool to have multiple industries combined. This is not just a conference for photographers, it's not just a conference for wedding planners. There are a ton of creatives in the room, and they are all powerhouses in their own ways. And the energy has just been amazing. I know I've said that word like 5 million times. But yes, this conference has been amazing.

Tori Kelner

Hi, I'm Tori Kellner. I'm a wedding photographer and I educate other photographers on growing their business. This has been the most amazing experience. Literally, since the happy hour, I was already sold on having the best time. And I felt like I got my investment back just from hanging out with this group. And then after the first day, same thing, I feel like I could have gone home and already got so much out of it. But I'm glad there's another day to keep learning and growing. I think the biggest takeaway that I got was coming in thinking that I didn't necessarily belong in this room. And then after the first 10 minutes, I was like, Nope, this is my place. I'm with my people. And I felt so welcomed and challenged at the same time, which was just something I didn't expect. And I feel like just the conversations that I've had have grown me and my business so much in just a few days. So it's been amazing I'm so grateful for Laylee and everything she's poured into my business and as a business owner and a person she has really helped me grow. So it's been amazing and I hope any future attendees come and enjoy and learn so much.

Danielle

I am Danielle Throckmorton. I am a business Strategist, Speaker and luxury retreat host and I am new to Les Lee's audience and super excited to be one of the creative educators to get to attend this event. What helps Without me, aside from the incredible speakers and the other women that are attending is the attention to detail. I've been to many conferences and the intimate setting the details, from branding, to logo to design to food, like she's hitting on all of it. And it's really, really neat to see because as a creative entrepreneur, and also slightly an introvert, it's nice to have someone really think of all the details, and not one for anything. So you can be open to receiving the content without all the distractions. So I'm very thankful to be here. And that is something that I think really stands the creative Educators Conference apart,

Dingding

Hi, this is Dingding, and we're at the creative Educators Conference, and I came here basically, because of lelee. I met her at the spark conference, and she has this incredible warm energy and just makes you feel very safe in her space in her aura. And so that's what brought me here, and I have an unpopular opinion about my history. I'm an illustrator, commercial artist, and I find my industry to be more on the competitive side. And we're fighting for clients and competing with each other from time to time, you know, our school chips. But I find that both spark conference and the creative educator space, being super supportive, and everyone's really friendly. We're all exchange ideas and share what we know. And I really love this environment where you know, we help each other grow.

Julie Freed

Hi, I'm Julie freed, and I'm the owner of Dallas Girl Friday, and I'm a system strategist for wedding professionals. And this conference has been an absolute game changer. For me entering the education space, I think that my favorite part about this conference is how incredibly personal it feels, even though it is I mean, it's not a huge group. It's not an overwhelming 1000 person auditorium. But I think it feels

so incredibly personal to each person's strengths, whether you are a visual learner, whether you learn by being in a group, and being tactile and hashing things out with other people. There's really even space for all of that. And that's been really incredible, and by far worth the investment.

Erin Perkins

Hi, I'm Erin Perkins am the founder of Mabely Q, my biggest takeaway from the conference, is that there have been things in my business that I've been using as a safety net, and I need to let that go.

Lindsey

Hi there. I'm Lindsey J. Williams and I teach wedding professionals how to grow their business with wedding shows. So I have a super niche market in the industry. And this coverage, the creative educator conference has helped me hone in on that niche, hone in on my marketing, and really learn how to connect with the people I want to serve. I have enjoyed so many things about this conference, the speakers are unmatched. The educators are so willing to mingle with the guests. And it's almost like you can't even tell who's the speaker who's the guest at the conference. Everybody is just having so much fun mingling and learning and brainstorming. Even at night in the hotel lobby. Like we're all huddled up with our laptops and sweatpants and really diving in and workshoping what we learned at the conference. So this has been unlike any other conference that I have attended. And it's been just such a great experience Laylee. Thank you for putting this together. I will never forget it.

Lauren

Hi there. So I am Lauren black of Lauren black.com. And I do decision coaching. So helping people overcome decision fatigue and make more confident decisions. And I just wanted to thank Laylee for putting on the creative educator conference. This has been a game changer for me and my business. I am blown away at all the content that is so actionable. There are so many key things that I'm going to implement in my business right away. And I think the biggest takeaway for me so far, is building a business that works for me and my style, so that I'm not being pulled in the direction that everybody else is going. And so I can build it my way, and hearing people like Candice koppla come on and say how she's building her business without social media being her main thing is so refreshing to be since I don't want to be blasting all over social media all the time. That stresses me out. So I'm super excited to implement things and thank you so much.

Makeda

Hi, my name is Makeda Mutema-Newton. I am a minimalism coach for overwhelmed women who wants to declutter their homes and create space for what really matters most, what has been the biggest takeaway from the conference? For me, it was really the fireside chat with Ellen, she really focused on just the heart of your business, and just making decisions that would align with the end goal of your vision, or just the the end goal of your business or just the overall vision. And I really love that because sometimes we can get so stuck on just paying attention to what other people are doing the popular tools that are out there, that we tend to, you know, just lose focus of that. So, you know, she just kind of reminded us to be intentional in our own business and to make decisions that would work best for us. Thank you.

Sandra

Hi, everybody. My name is Sandra Henderson, I'm a wedding photographer at Life is beautiful photography, and also a business coach and podcast host. I am here at the creative Educators Conference. And my biggest takeaway from this experience has been just the amazing connections I've

been able to make. And hearing all of the incredible value that these speakers have to offer has been completely incredible. Like words can't describe how amazing these people are. If I could give entrepreneurs one piece of advice it would be to stay true to yourself. And don't worry about what everybody else in your industry is doing. You need to find what works for you. And that is going to be the thing that guarantees your success going forward in business.

Haylee Gaffin

Now that we are a month past the conference, what emotions are you feeling about how it went, what it looks like for next year, and all the things that everyone wants to know?

Laylee Emadi

Oh, my gosh, I went through like a roller coaster of emotions. Honestly, I was like comatose for like, several weeks afterwards, I was exhausted. And I felt like I couldn't get my head on straight. And now that I'm kind of out of that, like post conference fog slash like it felt like a dream. It does still feel like a dream. But now I'm kind of homesick for it, if that makes sense. Like I miss it. And I can't I'm getting so excited as I'm starting the preliminary plans for the second round. So I'm just really, really excited honestly, more than anything.

Haylee Gaffin

Awesome. I love that. As you continue to plan and iterate your in person education, including this conference, including your retreats. Are there any changes to future in person events that you have planned? Based on this year's conference?

Laylee Emadi

Honestly, this might sound really cocky, but I'm gonna say it anyway. Not really, I feel like there's a few things that I'm going to do differently. For sure. I definitely learned a lot in this first round of the Conference of things I don't want to do and things I do want to do. But the general heart of things has just been like solidified through this experience. Like, I think that having really great motivators, having really great, you know, values and knowing what you want to provide for your attendees is number one, and I don't think that's going to change for me at all.

Haylee Gaffin

Amazing. And now for the question. I did not prepare you for it, but you should have been prepared for it. What is your unpopular opinion about planning conferences?

Laylee Emadi

My unpopular opinion on this is actually something that like, it's completely, completely my opinion on it. And I think that I don't want to throw I'm not throwing shade at any other conference host. But I think one thing that I've realized about myself as a host that's unique, and that I love and that I wish more people would be thoughtful of when they host things. Is that like, Yes, I'm just hosting it. And so, and yes, I need to protect my energy and protect my boundaries. But I think attendees really appreciate when I would be present for everything. Like there were late night chats in the lobby, and instead of going in my room, and like I was exhausted, I'm gonna be real about it. You guys know I keep it real. I wanted to pass out I was No, I've never been more tired in my life. But I stayed that down there until like midnight both nights because I wanted to make sure attendees knew that I was in it with them. If I saw an attendee standing by themselves, I went and I spoke to them. I can't tell you guys how many conferences I've been to where I'm basically ignored as an attendee by the conference hosts could be

like, two steps away and won't even say hello. And it's not intentional. I don't think it's like an intentional slight, but I think it should be intentional as the host to make sure that you're doing everything you can to make every attendee feel really welcome.

Haylee Gaffin

I remember there was one, I think it was the second night and I knew you were exhausted and we were all in your room. And you were like, Okay, guys, I'm gonna head downstairs and I was like, Are you sure you don't want to take like 15 minutes to take a nap and you're like, No, I'm gonna rally. I need to go talk to people. I want to go see people. It's like, okay, I'm gonna chill here for a little bit. But I'm really glad you shared that because I do think that the intention but Behind it is really important. And it allows for so many attendees to feel seen, especially when you're going by yourself, because that's one of the scariest things is going to a conference by yourself. And not knowing anyone, but then having the host of the conference come up to you just makes them feel seen and heard and valued in the investment that they've made. So I think that's really important. And I'm glad you shared that. Now for the question that most people probably came here for, because they had FOMO, because they weren't at this one. Where can they grab a ticket?

Laylee Emadi

Oh, my gosh, well, I have loved this question. I'm like, so excited that so many people are so excited to join us next year. And we are still keeping it intimate. So make sure you join our waitlist tickets are not open right now we did do a little presale. And we're actually a third of the way sold out. So if you are wanting to attend, go join the waitlist at Creative educator conference.com. Or you can probably find the link over at Layli mati.com. It's somewhere over there. Or like I said, just make sure you're on the net newsletter, make sure that you've got your notifications turned on. And we actually have a creative educator conference Instagram account for the conference itself. So make sure you're following along there as well. Perfect. And

Haylee Gaffin

I will link all of those in today's show notes.

Laylee Emadi

Oh my gosh, this is so convenient. I wish you could interview me every time because you'll just edit it and make the magic happen on your own.

Haylee Gaffin

Well, Laylee, I just want to congratulate you again on the conference. It was amazing. And I cannot wait for all of the educators who are going to be impacted by what you have created over the next few years because I know it's not going away anytime soon. And I'm just really thankful to be a part of your team, but also just a friend of yours. So yeah. Hey, Lee,

Laylee Emadi

thank you so much. And thank you for being such a big part of it. I mean, like I said, we kept the attendees were were a small number, but also the sponsors. Were just as intimate and I'm so so honored that you're part of it. So thank you for everything. For show notes and resources mentioned on today's episode had to so here's the thing podcast.com This show is brought to you by the creative educator Academy, where we teach creative entrepreneurs how to teach because I believe that industries thrive when experts can share their knowledge. Well, if you're enjoying the podcast, I'd love

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