

Laylee: Hey friends, welcome to this week's episode. we are joined by Kristen Sweeting, who is lovely. Hi, Kristen.

Kristin: Hi!

Laylee: Kristen and I met in person at the Hybrid collective conference.

We were both speaking and we hit it off right away. And I was like, we must be friends. Shocked to literally nobody that I was like, you're going to be my friend and we're going to make this happen. so Kristen is a wedding photographer and a business coach. She's based in Nashville and she has 14 plus years of experience in weddings and she creates scalable systems and supportive communities for creative entrepreneurs.

And she's all about making a big impact and helping her students do the same. Kristen and I have like a lot of overlap with. The offers that we have. So I think this can be a fun episode to kind of dive into those we're really going to focus this episode around talking through like our offers, you know, we keep things conversational, but I really want to talk about, creating community intentionally and authentically. And I'm so excited to have Kristen. You're here to talk with us about that. So, Kristen, tell our audience who hasn't met you yet, because we have a lot of non photographers, and I know that's like a lot of your audience.

tell us about everything that you offer, everything that you do for creatives as a whole, and why you're so passionate about your coaching offers.

Kristin: Yeah, well, I'm so excited to be here. I feel like we're just going to dive into all the little rabbit trails today, so I can't wait. yeah, I'm Kristen Sweeting. you know, I feel like I've always been a mentor, even before I was a photographer. as a teenager, I was a camp counselor and, my first job out of college, I studied music education.

So I thought I wanted to be a teacher and then realized I loved mentoring so much more. And so. was a youth director at a mega church in my previous life.

Laylee: That's so crazy.

Kristin: So I like took middle schoolers on mission trips and big camps and, you know, rented out huge blow up bouncy castles for lock ins. And it was like such a foundational part of my life.

I've changed a lot as a person since that season, and then became a photographer coming out of that job and almost immediately started mentoring. It wasn't really on purpose. And that was back in the days when there , weren't really photography educators. There wasn't this.

kind of culture around coaching and to get any information from another photographer was hard actually. Like one time I quoted this project, I should have probably charged 10, 000 for it and I charged 300 for it because I didn't know what questions to ask. I didn't know about licensing.

Like there were all these things I didn't know about. And there wasn't this like, who can I hire to have like a coaching call with or anything like that. and so, you know, coaching has just been a passion of mine for so long. Cause I think we can alleviate so much pain and frustration for people along their journey.

And it just has always felt natural and right. Like if you're learning and growing, why not pass it on to the next person and make their journey so much easier.

So as far as offers go, we, we went from one on one coaching to now having a mastermind and a membership.

And, back in the day when people were like, you need to record an online course. And then I did, and I launched it and it was like pulling teeth to sell any of it. And like all the different iterations that it's got. I mean, we could talk for so long. So yeah, that's where we're at now.

dangerous creatives is a membership and a mastermind around group coaching creatives. and we also have kind of accidentally become a marketing agency because as our clients have been growing and building their own webinars and launching their own things, sometimes we were finding places where people were getting stuck.

And so we've kind of built a team to help people. Implement the coaching as well. And that has been really fun too.

Laylee: I love that. so you are in Tennessee and I didn't realize, are there a lot of megachurches there? Cause I'm like outside Dallas. I'm in the burbs of Dallas, Texas. So when you said megachurch, I immediately knew exactly what your job entailed, as a former high school teacher, I worked so closely with a lot of the youth directors at the megachurches here.

And that's a huge job. Like, it sounds like it's not, but it is.

Kristin: Oh no, it's a huge job and you get a lot of You get like a lot of criticism I mean, same with teachers, you know? and I I never did teach in a school. Like I pivoted to. Mentoring pretty quickly, but I feel like that is one of the things people don't talk about as much as just how much criticism Educators in general get when you're kind of out there doing so much for people in your communities.

Like if y'all are listening and you're an educator, like, you know that you're doing so much for people and there's always this kind of fear of, criticism. If I don't do enough, will I be criticized? Um,

Laylee: yeah, that's real.

Kristin: yeah, in the megachurch, it was constant. Just if anyone's wondering, like, I had email inboxes full of critiques of my 21 year old self trying to take care of these crazy middle schoolers.

So,

you know,

develop some Develop some tough skin, for sure.

Laylee: yeah. that culture for sure. If you know, you know, but that's so cool. I just love hearing people's stories about like how their past. Jobs and experiences. I talk about this a lot on this podcast. People are probably sick of hearing how important it is not to undervalue your experience before your current career.

Like your first career probably helped you so much now that you're doing with your retreats. it's funny. Cause as you were listing your offers, I was like, she's leaving things out, but I leave things out all the time because we both have such a huge offer suite. But I know you take groups of women abroad and do like these crazy cool retreats, like that's insane.

And you just are coming off of doing a camp, right? Your Dangerous Creatives Camp.

Kristin: Yes. Yeah. I know. I leave things out because otherwise it makes me sound

like an insane person.

Laylee: Yeah. No, we sound crazy and we'll never stop talking. And be like, here's my list. it

Kristin: Yeah.

Laylee: the wall, you know? Um, but anyway, I love that you, um, Mentioned some of like what could be perceived as like a random history leading up, but it's not at all. It's so aligned.

that's so cool. So I feel like you've obviously, similarly to me, I was just thinking about this, this morning of every job I've ever had or that I've sought out on purpose has like low key been community building in some way, shape or form. And so I'd love to hear like your perspective on. how does somebody who wants to create something like a membership, like a mastermind, like a, I don't want to say following, but a community that is really invested, what are your best tips for that?

For like somebody who hasn't every single job leading up to now, you know, someone who doesn't have that history from college and before they were a creative, like what's the best steps that they can take to create that really close knit community of like loyal clients, customers, students that you're serving well.

Yeah.

Kristin: Yeah. I love talking about this topic because I think this is where the introverts empathetic people get to shine. Is in building community because I know it's easy to look out there and be like, well, I'm not this huge personality or I don't want to be famous or you know, whatever the thing is that Makes us feel like maybe we aren't meant for educating or podcasting or coaching or whatever.

I actually want to like flip that for you because I think that if you can develop this skill of community building, you are such a potent educator and you'll help people get more results and feel like really happy working with you, like really. Inspired by the connection that you have in the community you're creating.

I just think this is like, if you're relating with any of that, like, this is the thing to double down on is building community. and you know, while I do think some of it comes naturally, I think there's a couple different skills that we can all work

on Developing and being better at, which one is listening and, you know, I can go into this more but also the self worth work of figuring out what you really stand for and believe in and, like speak really clearly on that.

So you're kind like carving out your own niche by understanding what's really important to you. So with the first one with listening, you know, some first steps, if you haven't built a community yet is getting out and taking people out to coffee, asking questions in your Instagram stories to understand why people are following you, creating space for people to be heard.

People are tired of hearing people just like yapping their mouths all day, you know, and like, me and lately do, we have our own podcast and we're like, we love talking and we love saying things, but also both of us have developed a way of listening that then lets us be better educators.

Cause we're creating stuff for what people are telling us. Right. So if you're trying to be an educator or a mentor, The more you listen, the more you're going to be able to spot on make something for your community. And you'll have less of those times where you launch something and it's crickets because You made something without there being any connection to the people that want to work with you or that are Paying attention to what you're doing or that are excited about what you're doing

I just think that like the listening part like makes you a good marketer makes you a good educator and also is like that first step in creating community.

Laylee: It's so funny because Like I said, we met in person and hit it off and I just like adore you. And we talk on DMS all the time, but it's literally like I tell people when they say, what's the first place you want to start?

And I always say, start one on one, like ask questions, get to know your people. And I love the way that you put it. that listening makes you better and it prevents those crickets. So like, This is what I always get asked by my students. What am I supposed to ask people?

Because I feel like if I want to listen and I'm used to talking, how do I like ask a really intentional question and then like, have it be enough to where I can shut up and they feel like ready to talk.

Kristin: Yeah. Yeah. did this on a recent coaching call with someone cause that feeling of, well, I ask questions in my stories and no one answers. Right. And we've all been

there and it

like also sucks. Right. It also sucks to like put the question box up and be like, literally no one's answering me.

What am I, I'm trying to listen. and so really, I think. Think about like a good date that you went on or think about a friend that you enjoy Being around it doesn't necessarily start with you being like tell me all your family trauma you know, I mean or if you're a two like me, maybe it does and you've had to work on your own boundaries, But you know like start easy.

So Do a fun this or that to start, you know, even getting people responding or having a conversation with you Me and lately we're talking about friends before this and like I'm totally a Phoebe, maybe Phoebe and Rachel, I'm a combination, Laylee,

Laylee: I can see that for you.

Kristin: yeah?

Laylee: I can see the Rachel for sure. And well, the Phoebe was a given, but I can see some Rachel in there.

Kristin: said she's Phoebe and Chandler, which is hilarious and amazing.

Laylee: Which is a problem. It's a pro it's a problem. It's a problem.

Kristin: I love it, it's perfect. but like, even starting with something like that, like you love friends, being like, hey, are you more of a Phoebe or a Rachel, and like the back and forth. And even just starting a conversation, because you're building trust and someone doesn't owe you an answer if there's not any kind of even like baseline friendship, ha ha, fun, you know, moment.

So don't be afraid to like ask silly questions to start, but then I think another place, especially if you're educating people or you're working in an industry, is to ask people what their goals are. this is huge in networking to, you know, people get kind of in their heads about networking and like, please send me clients, you know, that's what we all feel like we're doing, but if you go into a meeting, really trying to serve that other person and listen to them and asking them what their goals are and what their career dreams are, and then maybe there's something that aligns for y'all to do something together.

Maybe there's not, but you're not like expecting every interaction to be a transaction and I think people can feel that when you feel it. So if you're doing this online, I love a story box, like a question answer you can do fun ones. You can start easing into business conversations. Start easing into what fears are around different things, and even picture yourself maybe five years ago, like, what did you need at that time, and see if there's a question that you can bring up from your own experience in the past.

Laylee: Oh, I love that. It's like such a great tip. And I feel like it's something that hopefully listeners can just go do right now, which is amazing. I should do the friends one just to see what people say. Maybe I'll, I'll set a reminder to do it when this episode goes live. but I love that. And I think.

It's such a great place for people to discover. Like you said, what people are needing, create the thing. I'd love to take some time and dive into like, they've understood their people. They're starting to grow their community. How do they ensure that they're delivering? like you said, you mentioned this in the beginning and I wrote it down to come back to you.

Cause I was like, that is such a normal fear for so many people, which is the pressure that like, okay, I've created this thing. Like. Am I doing enough? like, are people happy? Do they like it? So like, how do people ensure that they're actually delivering the thing that they've promised, that they've spent the time creating and cultivating after the conversations that they've had? So like they chatted about it, they created a membership or a mastermind or a retreat or something, and now they're terrified because they're like, how do I know I'm doing enough in this thing?

Yeah.

Kristin: I think, think back to the result that you're trying to have for people. And where I feel like I didn't do this right is I feel like the first few years of offers need to be really hands on because you're still building your confidence as an educator and a coach and being able to deliver a

result for someone. And so if you're just putting out a course and hoping that it's helping people. You're going to have a really hard time, one, getting feedback from people to know if it's helping people, two, tracking people's progress to see if they're going through the program.

So, I feel like one on one can be a great thing when you're first getting started in education or some kind of group program where you're like so hands on with

people that you are tracking the data of their results. You know where your students are at. You're seeing where they're having problems. And then if you can turn all those frameworks, all the things that worked with your one on one clients into a course, I think it's so much more successful on the back end.

and so we're kind of doing some of that now. Like, you know, Now I feel so confident in the results that I deliver for people, but it was from working like really, really intensely with people for years to then feel the confidence to sell a course that I'm really proud of. so I'm not sure if that fully answers your question.

Laylee: I feel like that's great, I mean, Moving along with that. I love this advice so much because I feel like that's such a common mistake and a mistake that even a few years in I made, because there was a moment where I was working with a coach and I made this huge investment. It was like 10, and it was like one of the biggest mistakes I've ever made where I was being like. Lured over to the dark side of like, here's how to put everything in auto. And just like you make a bajillion dollars, but also like, don't worry, nothing's going to suffer. And it's, that's impossible, you know? So, I since learned that's not my style. I like to be hands on. I like to show up, you know, but I love that you brought that up.

And then I also wonder too, I guess going off of that, When you have created this community and it's starting to grow and you're doing the one on one or you're doing a small group coaching program, like you had mentioned, and you are showing up and you're doing the hard work, like a few years in, if you're developing something like your membership, how are you ensuring if it's a little bit less of you, that people still feel like they're getting the most or the best of you?

Kristin: Yeah. I mean, with the membership, I still have tried to infuse different ways of showing up in person, even in a membership. and I think, you know, clear communication at the front end, being really, really, really clear about what it is that you're offering and what they're to expect from it, I think is huge too.

So if there is less of you in a program or you're moving that direction, I'm not marketing it as one on one coaching. I'm not marketing it as. really high touch. I think the community then is way more important and People that can then coach each other and lean into each other and having these different, like points along the way where people feel taken care of or checked in on things like that.

Um, I've also found like y'all have probably done this with whatever other business you have or what experience, but you think through your client journey and you're like, when in the journey, do people start losing energy, start getting infused. Stop coming to calls, you know, and is there something you can build into your program there that reinvigorates the process that like does a little energy spark?

So, you know, we have a couple different, in person things that we use for our mastermind. And that is like right at the time where people start losing steam. And so they're intentionally put there to be like an energy boost and people usually leave a retreat and make a lot of money, you know, it's because they're just feeling good and they're excited.

And so if you're doing something more like a membership or a online course, there can be those things built in virtually to that are, you know, more gamified lessons or something new or some kind of, fun live zoom hot seat kind of thing. You know, it's like think through those things. I think that that will just like increase the quality of what you're offering to you.

Well,

Laylee: amazing advice. I feel like it's interesting because I'm only in the second month of my own membership and I've never done a membership before. So as you were talking, I was like, okay, let me make sure I hit those check marks. but what I've been trying to do is like, add in like surprise touches because I definitely, I was like, this is what you're going to get out of this membership.

It's like, Super low ticket. It's like a no brainer for what they're going to get resource wise and community wise, but I'm also still trying to show up and show them that I care about them and try to give them what I can when I can. so I love that you mentioned that. I feel like I'm bouncing all around, but my listeners are used to my crazy,

Kristin: I think just in what you're doing in the questions and Instagram, you can have that first group that helps you develop your curriculum to, you know, like, you're kind of co creating with the community that you're building as you're creating. Your program to, like Did you do a beta launch for any of your first programs

Laylee: Yeah, almost every program

I've done. I've done a beta.

Kristin: kind of like, Hey, you know, I'm still rough drafting this. I had a friend tell me one time when he's having like deep conversations with his partner, he's like, I haven't totally figured out what I think about this.

So this is a rough draft. And so he'll be like, Hey, rough draft, but like, I'm feeling this way or I'm thinking about this, but like totally not set on it. And so. Yeah, I think a beta can be a huge rough draft or a more in depth questionnaire or marketing research call, but instead of you being like, here's what I think people want and I'm going to make a really general course, I think that it just is going to be harder to sell something that you're not really sure is what people are needing.

Laylee: Yes, I completely agree with that. And I actually think that lends itself to the next question I had anyway. I mean, it might even answer the question that I had, which was, when you mentioned. Having the community help each other and having the community like answer each other's questions and be there for one another This was something I think that took me a really long time to get really clear about who my community members should be and I think that's something a lot of people struggle with because I wanted to help everybody and I think I could help everybody in some way But I don't, I mean, I specifically work with educators in the creative industry and that is it now, like speakers and educators.

So , how do you start to one, decide who is my community supposed to be comprised of? And two, how do you ensure that it's the right people? Like, how do you get the right community members in your group?

Kristin: Ugh, it's hard because it's probably gonna be messy for a second, you know? I mean, I do think niching is really important, and so like were saying, you're niching for educators and creative industries, and that's just such a clear niche. And I've always kind of struggled with niching, but my niche is more of a person or like a personality type.

So I do mostly work with photographers, photography, educators, coaches, but. Our program's open to all creatives too. And so what we have found that works really well is, niching. I mostly work with people that feel like they recognize themselves as empathetic. Maybe highly sensitive.

years ago, I let things happen naturally for a long time. And there was this moment at one of our in person retreats where we looked around and we were

like, Are you an oldest daughter? Are you an oldest daughter? Were you categorized gifted growing up? Oh my gosh, did you get married early and got divorced in your thirties?

Like all of a sudden it just was like, there was this whole archetype of a person of like very creative, potentially has ADHD or is highly sensitive. was categorized gifted as a kid, as an oldest daughter, maybe got married and divorced young. So all of a sudden there's just like. this person. a lot of us have autoimmune diseases cause when you're empathetic and you're used to kind of taking on everything for everyone.

It stores itself in your body. This sounds so niche, and I realize it, but like, my programs are filled with people with this similar personality type, which is me, too, you know, like, I've experienced all those things, or, you know, people feel like they've experienced a bunch of them. So, I love that niche, and I think as you're being really authentic in your own messaging, you're sharing bits of your story, I think that will like naturally happen.

So I feel like example is more of like a personality niche. Whereas you could also do a industry niche, or a, location niche, or a goals centered niche. but yeah, just think the more authentic you are and the more you're speaking like directly to that person, the more business will flow and you'll be able to recognize when someone's not a good fit.

Laylee: Oh my gosh. Which is so important. can you talk a little bit more about that part? Cause first of all, I love everything you shared and I think it'll hopefully give people a little bit of permission to not have to focus so much on like, okay, well, this is my ideal client avatar. And it's like, Well, maybe it's in a different format like, I love that you listed all the different ways that you could niche down.

even hearing that for myself, I was like, how freeing and how wonderful. and I do believe, I truly believe that like attracts like, so I love what you said about that happening naturally, but yeah, tell me more about like when people are in a good fit, like how do you recognize that?

And then what do you do?

Kristin: Yeah, um, let me share all my embarrassing story. No, I'm just, I'm just kidding, but I mean, it is like, it's messy. And my journey to figuring this out was messy. because I do really care and I do really want to help everyone. And I think, especially as a mentor and an educator, knowing your own limitations

and knowing what you're not good at is also really, really important information.

and learning to kind of trust your body more, learning to trust your intuition a bit more. So how I figured out someone wasn't a good fit was by having the wrong fit in my programs, you know, and either it's creating so much stress for you as the educator, cause you feel like you can never meet that person's expectations.

potentially they're dealing with something that's just. Bigger than you. we require or recommend that everyone has a therapist or has been to therapy before they join one of our business coaching programs, because it does bring up everything for you when you're talking about money. When you're talking about, you know, growth and abundance and these things, it brings up anything that hasn't been dealt with.

And so, you know, with love and care for people who have been in my programs, if they're not a good fit, I have to say that and I have to let them out.

and that was hard for me at first because. I was like, well, I've already worked so hard for this person and, you know, they've already gotten all this stuff and already kind of struggle with, My own boundaries anyways, but what I did for several years was just double down on working harder and harder and harder for this person and giving more and more and more and more until I was so burned out.

I didn't want to coach anymore or educate anymore, so I think that that's like a big thing you have to watch out for. is like, you won't be the right fit for some people or what they're looking for is just not something that is like a business coaching thing. Maybe it's a therapy thing. Maybe it's you know, something else.

they're just on their own journey. I've gotten way better at blessing and releasing people and being like, it seems like what you need isn't something I can offer, so I'd love to just. release you from this program. I hope you find what you're looking for somewhere else, kind of a thing. it's hard for me because, you know, you hear so much.

Criticism of educators. And when I started, I was like, I never want anyone to feel like they didn't get a million percent value from me. And so when you take that mindset into your programs, I think it is good. Cause you're really trying to create something good, but then there's a bad side to it as well, because like, if

your business is not taking care of you, we're just recreating codependent patterns in our business.

That are going to hurt us in the long run and in the short term.

Laylee: Wow. Oh my gosh, that in itself was, I think, so helpful for me to hear, let alone everyone else, hopefully who's listening. I mean, you touched on so many incredible points of how much comes up when you're working with a coach. That you maybe don't even think about until you start getting into it.

And also as difficult as it can be to turn someone away or release someone from a program, I think back to the investments that were the biggest quote unquote mistakes. Like I always try to find something positive out of them, even if they weren't a good fit. But it would have been so much better for me.

Had that educator had the leadership skills and the ability and the wherewithal to say, I just don't think this is going to serve you in the time you're in or whatever it is that you're doing. Like that would have been such a gift to me instead of like, let's just try to make it work, you know? So as difficult as it is.

It's such an important lesson for people who are in leadership positions to understand.

Kristin: Yeah, yeah, and one boundary that I've picked up along the way or that someone gave me the advice to do. Cause sometimes someone's in your program and there's something that comes up, but like you really did work so hard for them and they got a lot of value out of it. And so kind of having some kind of release valve of like, Is there potentially a, like, fee to leave the program early, you know, or something like that.

So that's something that we've also played around with, of like, hey, it seems like things have changed. here's the way out. I do feel like I brought a lot of value to you. But maybe it doesn't make sense to keep going. And then there's the other side where you're like, this actually isn't physically good for me to continue working with you and to me that's just like, total refund situation.

Bless and release, you know.

Laylee: Yeah. I think this is just such an, unspoken thing in the education industry. So I'm so glad that , we got to touch on it a little bit and just to hear your perspective on it. we covered a lot in this episode and as we're wrapping

up, I always ask everybody on this show, what your unpopular opinion is on the topic we're talking about.

So I mean, we talked about kind of multiple topics within community and authentic community building, but if you have an unpopular opinion, I'd love to hear it.

Kristin: Hmm. I feel like I have a lot of unpopular opinions.

Laylee: That's probably why I was like, we need to be friends immediately.

Kristin: Yeah, I, guess probably the unpopular opinion that came out of this conversation is like, it does take time. And there were so many points in this journey where like, I wish I'd had a coach like me to coach me, you know, like when you find someone that really does see. Life the way you do and sees business the way you do, you know, stick around with that person Watch what they do ask them these tough questions Because it will save you like a lot of pain and frustration and let me think I have so many unpopular opinions.

I guess one of mine is like We do have frameworks that we've built that we think help people across personality spectrums, businesses, all those things. I think the unpopular opinion is that you have to be able to work with your own personality and your own goals to adjust things. It's like learning styles, like with education.

You have to adjust everything that you hear to your own personality and your own learning style. There's not one silver bullet. There's not one webinar funnel. There's not one marketing strategy that is going to work for everybody. And I think a great coach understands different learning styles and can help you adapt multiple strategies to your business and your learning style.

So I would say that's mine. And like, if you're an educator, learn about different personality types, learn about different learning styles. It is not a hundred percent your client's fault. If something's not working for them, like you're in there with them, trying to figure out how to adapt it to work for them.

Laylee: Yeah. Oh, I love that. I actually completely agree with that. I feel like, again, that's something not a lot of people talk about or cognizant of as they're going forward. So I love that you brought that up too. This is such a good episode and I feel like you just have so much great insight on.

community and the people that you serve. And like, I feel like inspiring to hear somebody care so much to know their people so well, and in turn, be able to actually show up and deliver for them. So thank you for sharing all of that with us. And would love for people to know how to continue to connect with you.

So it's like the best way for people to find things you do and become your new best friend.

Kristin: Well, if you, love this podcast, I think you'll love our podcast. We're the dangerous creatives podcast. So talk about mindset and money and. Really, probably all the TMI things that you didn't know you wanted to talk about. Lately, I've been trying to, do this thing, you know, I've been trying to make Fetch happen, and I think we need to have, like, what is it, like, unpopular opinions dinner parties, or, like, taboo topics dinner parties.

Because I'm like, we want to talk about female breadwinners. We want to talk about getting divorced when they're in the wedding industry. Like we have all the things that we want to talk about. So, so yeah, come hang out with us at Dangerous Creatives Laylee's going to be on soon too.

So they'll have a great chance to pop over.

Laylee: I can't wait. It's going to be so fun. Yeah, definitely check out Dangerous Creatives and, you know, obviously connects with Kristen in all the places. Thank you so much for sharing all these amazing tips for our people.

Kristin: Yeah. Thank you for having me. This has been so fun.

Laylee: Loved it. All right. I'll see you guys next week on our Snack Size episode, and make sure that you are subscribing, leave a review, leave a rating, helps people find us, and then go do the same on the Dangerous Creatives podcast once you take a listen.

Kristin: Oh, thanks. Bye.