

Hey friend. Welcome to the Laylee Emadi podcast. This week's episode is a little bit different. I'm actually giving a little peek into a recording of a workshop I just did inside my membership called The Educators Lounge. It's a community for creative educators, speakers, course creators, mentors, anybody who monetizes their education in the creative industry.

And I did a full recap of what it's like to own a membership for. A full year because I am up on the one year anniversary of creating this community and this membership, and I've learned a lot. And so I wanted to do a full recap of what went well, what didn't go well, what I've learned, what's coming in the future.

And I hope this is helpful to anybody who wants to either start a membership or work on improving their own membership community. And I know I've learned a lot. I'm really excited. For the future of the Educators Lounge, and I hope this little look behind the curtain is helpful and interesting to you, and I hope you love the episode.

Hello friends. If you are watching this on the replay, we are doing a recap of one year inside the educators lounge, which is , my first foray into membership. Ownership. I've never had a membership before this, and I quite frankly, did not know what I was doing.

And I did a lot of research before I started it, but I knew that I needed to have something where people could continue to connect as educators, as leaders in their industry outside of the conference. And I think what happened was when I started the conference. You know, like four years ago and even before that, having the the Creative Educator Academy, which was my previous like signature course and program, was that we would all do really, really well altogether for a short amount of time.

And this applies to my mastermind and my group coaching and everything as well, is that we would be really, really like there for each other for a certain amount of time, and then we'd kind of fall off and everybody would really miss having. The ability to contact each other and to have a place to ask questions and feel like it was a judgment free zone.

Because I think that when you are a leader, when you're in charge of a lot of people, what tends to happen is we just feel like we have to be as close to perfect as possible, and we feel like there's not a really good place to. Go and learn and, and really be vulnerable and transparent. And that was like the heart behind the membership was just creating a space for people to come.

Yes, to learn, yes, to grow, yes to like, have all of those amazing resources at your fingertips. But more than anything, it was for the community to continue to grow and to be there for each other, outside of their, you know, once a year in-person conference. And so I, I was a little nervous about it, if I'm being honest.

Like I had no idea what was gonna happen. know, My goal for. The launch was, ironically, it was like 10 people. I was like, if I can get 10 people into this membership, like that would be awesome. That's 10 lives that are gonna be changed. That's 10 people that are gonna have each other's backs and like, it'll be great.

And then like those 10 people will get to reunite at the conference and it's gonna be awesome. And within a week of the launch, I had over 80 people sign up, which was. Like very exciting but terrifying at the same time. Like I straight up talked about it in therapy. That's how scared I was. I was like, it's great.

But I'm also very overwhelmed, like, what if I let these 80 something people down? I had a very, like, clear structure of what I wanted it to look like, and I, I had, and I'll go over that in a second too. I'm gonna break down exactly like what the structure was at launch and what it is now. But I was just so nervous because I take my responsibility as an educator and as a coach and as a community builder really seriously.

And I just always wanna make sure that I am delivering what I promise and more. And so all that being said, the launch went really, really well. And I think it went well because people really needed this space. Like I needed the space, so I know that other people did too. And I think, positioning it in the way that we did with it being coaching community and monthly strategy like that was all well and good.

And I I don't think it was wrong, but that was how it was structured, right? It was like monthly content coworking calls, community guest experts, like I filled it chockfull of stuff. Like there was something almost every single week and there was gonna be a backlog, which there still is.

There's the library full of like resources and freebies. Content and all the things that you could possibly ever need, but ironically, I am like 99% sure based off all the surveys, people joined it for the community. So what went well in the past year.

What went well is one, I really did. This was not like a PR move. I truly meant it when I said my founding members are going to help build this group to

change into what it's going to be. And I, I delivered on that promise. So. I created, what we call the suggestion box, which is just like a form that lives there.

People can drop in suggestions whenever they want and instead of just skimming those suggestions and being like, huh, cool idea won't do that, I actually implemented as many of them as possible. Obviously, we can't do every single thing that every single person wants, I made sure to, if I. Didn't take the suggestion, I made sure to connect with that member and like tell them the thought process.

And typically, nine times outta 10, what would happen was I'd be like, Hey, so I love your suggestion. I thought of that too. Here's why I went the other way. And they were like, oh yeah, no, like that makes sense, you know? And so I think having that clear communication. Going above and beyond, but then also implementing the suggestions that were able to be implemented changed a lot of the structure.

So we did away with the coworking calls, which a lot of people actually, after they were gone, they were like, oh, I wish those were still here. But during the times, not a lot of people would show up. And so now we're talking about for next year, which we'll talk about this in the next section of like, what's to come.

I'm probably gonna bring them back just less frequent. So that more people can come and enjoy them. I'm still giving people what they want, but it's not so redundant that nobody comes, you know, and that it's quote unquote time not wasted, but like that could be allocated in a different way. The other thing that worked really well was the q and a calls with me at the price point that this membership launched at and is currently at.

It is. only way to get access to me and my brain and my advice and my eyes on your business is through this membership or through.

My high level mastermind, which is closed right now, like it's, it's happening right now, but it's closed for new people. And so I think it made it such a no-brainer that you would get community and one-on-one help at like a price that truly makes no sense for the audience. I'm gonna be clear about that.

So I think it worked well because. Opposed to what most coaches would've told me to do and what I would have told any of my coaching clients to do, I priced it quote unquote incorrectly. For the audience, like you guys who are here, you make enough money to pay me a lot more, and this is worth a lot more.

But I wanted it to be a no-brainer. I wanted it to be an easy supplement into your day so you're not even having to worry about it, like you're not thinking. Did I take advantage of this month? Because that's what I do. I, I thought about it as like, when I invest in something and I drop, like I did earlier this year, I dropped like six K on a six month group thing, like similar to this.

It's, I guess it, I would call it a membership. They don't, but I think it's a membership and, and every month that I get really busy and I don't utilize it, I'm beating myself up over it. I'm like, well, there goes a thousand dollars. I don't want that to happen for you guys. Like I want this to be a community that.

People can come together at the conference or virtually and just feel like it's completely worth it to them. And so I think that did go really well. Um, the price does, it has gone up once. It's gonna go up again next month, and so it's not gonna always be that way. But because I wanted the founders to have it be like a true win-win situation that worked really well for us. So retention went really well in this first year. However, growth didn't go quite as well. that was a hundred percent my fault. So let's, let's kind of like slide into the what didn't go super well in this last year and things that I learned from.

One is that I did not advertise this membership at all really after the first launch. Um, I focused solely and, and I don't think I made a mistake here. I I did this intentionally, especially in the first six months. I focus solely on growing the program internally instead of growing it.

In terms of like scaling, I wanted it to be the best version of itself within the first year so that next time we launch or do an any kind of marketing push, it's where I want it to be and it feels very well aligned and it feels like it makes a lot of sense. Um, and so because of that, we didn't scale a ton.

Our retention rate was incredible, which I love and I'm really proud of. We started with, um, I believe 84 members and we now have 74 members. had 17 people leave, and so that means that like. The net of having 74 people, we have had people join here and there without me really advertising it at all.

And I'm really proud of that too, because I think what that tells me is that you guys are telling each other and you're telling your people that this is a worthwhile place to spend your time. And so even though the, the growth wasn't great, the churn was, and I'm, I am really happy with that, with where that went.

Another thing that I think I learned a lot about is programming and content within the, within the membership itself. Like I mentioned, when we launched,

we had a once a month like training or resource, and that was like. What I started out doing then, because like I said, I implement the suggestions. I got several suggestions saying, well, we would love to provide a resource as members, like maybe once a month you can choose a member to Spotlight and they can get hands on teaching experience.

And I was like, of course. Heck yes. I love that. Like, that's a no-brainer to me. I love it. Let's implement It. Honestly didn't go super well. reason I didn't go super well is because. When you get a group of 70 plus 80 educators together, guess what? We all are very, very busy. And so typically, unless I'm reminding people to submit a resource or submit a training, they're not gonna remember, then I have to add it into my systems.

With my team to continually remind people to apply or pitch or whatever, one of their resources. And it, it added like an entirely new system, which added a ton more work and didn't have the result that we wanted. And so we backtracked on that based off the test and decided. We're gonna try another version of this in another way to spotlight our people, but do it in a way that's like a little bit more intentional, that's smarter and that works well for our community.

The other thing, uh, that I wanted to touch on that I have really learned is that I, I mean, I feel like I, I sound like a broken record when I say that. Like, members have told us and told me, and, and. Each other, how much they were craving the connection of a membership like this and a space to connect with their peers.

and I think I overloaded the content to the point where we almost ran out of time for the connection points. So I did a swap where. I swapped out those monthly resources a couple months ago with a networking call where we, I break us up into small groups and people are able to do, gives and asks and connect with each other, new people, people they already know, um, and get more time to get eyes on their business and to get questions that they need answered, answered face to face.

In a small group setting. And I love those networking calls and I think everybody who shows up to them really loves them too. We're gaining more people, um, you know, every month and oh, Hailey just said she loves the networking call and it reminds her of the small group work at the conference. I love that because I think that that's where there's magic to be seen and progress and, and results to be seen, I think in every setting.

But you have to be able to like. Manage every setting. So like the group q and a calls with me, we can all learn from each other's questions. But the small, small group, peer to peer, essentially like tiny mastermind groups, those are like another way to get more eyes on your business at the level that you're at, in or around the level that you're at, which I think is super rare for us as educators, leaders, speakers.

So. I really enjoyed that change and I, I enjoyed that challenge and I think that it's, I think it's going really well, and I'm excited about that, and that's not going anywhere. So now that we've talked about what's kind of went well, what I learned from, or didn't go well or struggled with, I am going to jump into what is coming and what you can expect for the next year, and what I see. That maybe could be potentially changing or shifting. Um, just give you a sneak peek into my brain. One, the suggestion box is not going anywhere. So if you guys have suggestions, like, please always give them to me.

I want them, the team wants them, Chloe wants them. We wanna hear from you. Uh, one thing I really wanna focus on is growing more interaction outside of the calls. This is something I definitely struggled with. I could have put this in the last section of things that, that I am still learning about. Is getting people to interact on a platform that is not like consistently native to them.

So nobody really wanted to be in a Facebook group, but everybody is on Facebook. So when I decided to host it in Kajabi communities, I don't regret that decision. I like that it's all in one place. I like that we know where we're at. I like that we can have breakout rooms. I like that the replays are easily available.

There's so much I like about Kajabi communities and I'm really thankful that we're here, but I definitely am working really, really hard on trying to find initiatives to get people to interact with each other in the feed, like in the community page, without the weekly call, without me facilitating it.

And the people who are here live, you guys are the ones that typically I see your names the most. So I'm, I'm trying to find ways to incorporate the rest of our almost 80 members into coming, coming on and, and doing things. So we might try things like, um, bringing back like challenges and gamifying things we might bring back, um, a few quarterly, well, we're definitely doing, continuing to do our quarterly guest experts and I think that will help.

And just reminders, tagging people. Alerting people sending notifications via email to have you guys open the Kajabi community app because you can access it as an app on your phone, making sure that app exists on your phone, things

like that. Those are all things that we are wanting to focus on so that we can continue to focus on that internal growth and that internal impact before any kind of like quote unquote scaling or growth on the outside.

I think that's something that won't necessarily change for me is I don't necessarily see this membership right now as being something that I do a huge, Traffic bump into like I, we have the sought after speaker system, which is the new course for speakers that's launching next month. That's gonna be a big push.

That's external. We have conference tickets to sell. Hopefully a lot of you guys will be there because I do consider it our kind of like annual reunion, which is really fun and the in-person component to this membership. And so I do think it's more of an internal thing for me. Which I think is kind of, from what I understand about memberships and all the research I've done on it, and uh, those of you who have been here for a while, you know that I even went to Nashville and did like this Stu McLaren one day, like intensive.

And I've, I've tried so much to, to really be able to deliver as an educator who continues to invest in her own growth. But what I understand about memberships is like, you either have like. The membership is the front facing like entry point of working with you, or it's something that's more like part of that ecosystem.

And that's what I want it to be. I want it to be people who already are like vibing with. Our ethics and our, uh, drive for impact and our personalities. And that's why I think I like, love this community so much and you guys love each other so much is because it, it is very much like cyclical and it's focused on internal growth.

So that's not gonna change. Um, what will continue to change is of course the pricing is gonna go up. As we move on in the future, we've gotta be able to like, make it make sense for all of the costs that go into it. as we had our community manager join in and other team members join in, and um, of course hosting it on Kajabi and things like that, there are costs that need to be met.

So that's something I always wanna be really transparent about. Um, the next change that's coming is that we are, Continuing to, while we're keeping the, the networking call, we're keeping the q and a call. I kind of alluded to this before. I'm going to add in a, we're gonna start quarterly and do a quarterly coworking call as well as keeping, I see, I see the people who like, are excited about that.

Like faces like, yes, it's coming back. so we're. The changes that we're adding back in a co, a quarterly coworking call that May, if it goes well, I may add, we may go back to monthly, I don't know. So that change may be coming, it may not. We're just gonna, we're gonna test it and see, and then, the quarterly guest experts are continuing on.

So that's not changing. It is staying. and that is it. So the big vision, big picture, for our like vision of the year ahead is. Continue testing things, taking all suggestions, making it a place that people want to check in on, and just kind of like providing this safe space and continuing to do my best in showing up.

And I'm definitely, I'm in it for the long haul. Uh, one thing that I did that I would suggest anyone do who wants to explore membership and explore starting something that's ongoing is give yourself the opportunity to shut it down if it's not going well.

And I think that that's a really hard thing to do for people who are, inherently maybe people pleasers like myself or really want to show up and, and commit really hard to something. I think the way that I did it, I built myself a safety net of not allowing anybody. To sign up for more than a year, after that first month launch, like it was month to month after that.

And it was anybody who knew who joined couldn't. Couldn't sign up for a year. They just couldn't because I was like, I can dedicate one year to trying something. That is a good amount of time I think, to understand if things are going well or not, or going the way I want them to or not, or worth everybody's time and investment or not.

And I'm so glad that I did that because now. A year in almost exactly. I can say with authority. I love this group. It's not going anywhere. I have no plans of shutting it down anytime soon. and so now I'm able to kind of bring back. An annual plan, uh, and, and have that be available for people who sign up and be able to incentivize that.

And I also think people who stay for a longer amount of time, obviously get the most out of it. a lot of you guys who are founders who have been here from day one. You're coming up on your one year renewal, it is really hard when you care a lot about people to see them leave, but it is okay. It's good to be excited for them. It's good to know that when people leave, sometimes it's because they're leaving for, a, a new venture or they wanna try a new educator, or they wanna try a new platform, or they wanna try a new community and they.



Might come back, you guys, like, they may come back to you and that's exciting and we wanna make sure they're excited about that. And I think trying really hard to like remove the personal from the professional when renewal periods come up is really important. Um, this for myself and for you.

Uh, so as you guys are deciding whether you wanna re-up or not, of course you can go to monthly, you can re-up annually, whatever. But all that being said, I'm really glad that I put the time, the timeframe on it that I did, so that now I can feel really secure in the transformations that have happened for people in the results that people have gotten.

So many of you guys have gotten on each other's podcasts in each other's group, coaching programs, speaking engagements, teaching opportunities, course growth affiliates, so many things have happened within the group that people aren't even like. Seeing other than me seeing them in my inbox and seeing them over on the feed of like success stories, that it just, it fills my heart, it makes me really happy and I'm, I'm, we're not going anywhere.

The lounge is not going anywhere. So that is my recap in 30 minutes or less. It was 20 in 24 minutes. My 24 minute recap. hope it wasn't too much of a ramble, but, if you have anything you wanna know, I'm an open book and I, you guys know I, I'm not shy about anything.

I will tell you anything. but I did just wanna say a huge thank you to every single founder and every single, member of this group who has joined in the last year. Whether you joined on day one, or you joined one day ago, I love you guys. I'm so thankful for you showing up for each other and for yourself, because I think as educators and leaders, we are the last people to.

Receive any of the things that we're giving. And I want you guys to know that you are worth receiving help and you are worth spending time on, and you should be spending that time on yourself. And I wanna applaud you and say that I'm really proud of you for showing up for yourself, and here's to another year of showing up even bigger and dreaming bigger and being there for each other.

Um, and I just want you to know that I'm right there with you. I've got your back, and I'm walking alongside you every step of the way. And I think that's what makes. This community is so special is that we're all in it together. So that was my cheesy love throw at your faces.