**final - S7E4**

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Katie linder.com. Backslash M Y w. Hey, Katie, how's it going? Hello, Sarah. I want to tell our audience that we are totally been recording these today. So we are Sprague. Yeah. I feel like we need to, yeah, we keep saying hello and I feel like we're holding something back from them. We'd like to peel the curtain back.

So this is episode four of our morning slash afternoon podcast recording. Yeah, but it is good to see you after a lunch break. Yeah. Yeah, it was a good lunch break and hopefully it will not result in the like post-lunch crash, Nita nap. I think given our topic for this session, we'll be fine. Cause we're talking a little bit about product and service design, which is, I know is something we both geek out about quite a bit.

So I'm excited to talk about this and, um, for listeners who maybe haven't listened to other episodes in this season, we are doing a bit of a retrospective where we are looking back on, uh, Some of the, the periods of our businesses, um, and kind of reflecting on where we are now and how we got here. Um, so with that in mind, Katie, I'm curious, uh, what ha what, if anything, I guess has changed for you in terms of your product design or how you approach the product design process over, over the course of your business development here?

Two things come to mind immediately. One is, um, for some of my products and particularly like my online courses, I feel like I have a system and I have templates. And so like when I, um, and we talked about this, I think way back in season three, when I was creating, um, social by design, which is my course on scholarship of teaching and learning, uh, this past year, I created blend by design, which is about, um, creating blended courses.

It took me like half the time to do blend by design that it took me to do social by design because I was not, I used all the same templates. I changed the colors so that it was like clearly a different, you know, set of materials. But, and I had to rewrite the scripts. I mean, it was a whole thing, but because I had, I wasn't like creating it from scratch and I feel like even just the system I had created and I used air table to kind of organize myself and I knew that I wanted to.

The first time around, I was like doing it as I was going. So I had to be like layering in like intro videos and worksheet videos. And it, like, it just felt like it kept ballooning. And I think I may have even talked about this in season three. It was like, it was never ending. And finally, I was like, starting to chip away at, you know, all of the tasks.

I had a much better understanding of that going into blend by design and, and like knowing what I wanted to do. So that was that's one thing that kind of immediately comes to mind. The other thing that immediately comes to mind is I really don't do anything I don't want to do. There you go. When it comes to services and products, I mean, it's like if I don't feel it, you know, or if I feel any form of like hesitation or procrastination around something, I wait it out until I understand why, or I set it aside because I'm like, obviously this is not something I'm like fully committed to or whatever.

And a good example of that is, um, right now I'm trying to figure out like, uh, uh, project management. Product. Um, because I, I recently got my PMP credential, which is a project management credential, and I had a lot of people, part of the reason I did it is because I had a lot of clients asking me questions about project management.

And I thought, well, let me get some kind of credibility around this. And then, you know, I've done it for a long time, but like, I'd like a better sense of the nomenclature and things like that. So I got the credential and I've been like slowly chipping away at like what I'm trying to do. And the more I chip away, I'm getting like more clarity and less clarity at the same time, because I have like a name for the program.

I have a brand kind of sub brand for the program, you know, I'm kind of like starting to understand the, um, the topics a little bit more like I've outlined it, but I'm still not quite there yet. You know? And so I'm kind of just like taking my time and like allowing it to unfold in the way that I think it needs to.

And. I feel way more comfortable doing that now than in the beginning. When I was, I would have pushed myself a lot harder to like figure it out. And partly I think because we're in the pandemic, you know, I've, I've, I've lowered my, um, my. My threshold of like what I'm asking myself to do. Um, so that's definitely part of it, but I also feel like I have a sense of confidence that like, I'll figure it out, you know, like it's just going to take some time to kind of think about what I want to do.

And I also layered on top of that, I don't feel this pressure of like, I have to launch to make revenue. Because I know we're making revenue, so it's like, I, it's not like that's the primary reason. So it allows the timing of, of product and service design to be right now, a little leisurely. I mean, I would kind of say it that way, but there's just not a lot of pressure behind it.

Um, and that's a big difference from in the beginning. I mean, if people listen to the show early days, I mean, I was like frantic with all my creative ideas. I mean, it just. It's like I had needed to like exercise a lot of things, you know, like I, and I was processing and trying, I think to let some things go and in order to let those things go, I had to create a product around them.

So that was a big deal for me. I think, to kind of get to a place where I don't feel that kind of frantic energy around my creativity anymore. And I feel like I can kind of slow down, let things unfold the way they're going to unfold and just trust that it's going to kind of be what it needs to be. Um, and.

I've also learned to create waiting lists. And that also helps me to feel like I can take some time because it used to be like, I had announced that I was working on something and then I'd feel this kind of rushed energy of like, I need to get it out so that people can have it. And now I'm just like go to the waiting list.

I'll let you know when it's ready. You know, so I can kind of collect people that are interested without feeling like the sense of urgency that I need to launch, you know, to maintain people's attention on something. So yeah, those are the things that feel kind of different to me. Nice. Yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah.

There's a lot there and a lot to impact, but what I'm mostly hearing is something we've kind of echoed a little bit throughout the recording of the season so far, which is just the sense of sort of maturity and subtleness in your business. Like you understand how things work now. You're not. Yeah, as you said, kind of frantically trying to learn new things very, very quickly to make revenue.

You know, it's, it's a little more settled, a little more planful, um, and you're able to kind of take that space, which I think is great and, and, you know, allows you some, some time to let those things percolate a little and see what, what rises to the surface. So, yeah, and I feel like you, Sarah, and just the last couple of years, I feel like we switched a little bit, actually.

I mean, I don't feel like you were frantic, but like, I feel like in the beginning I was the one who was like churning through like a lot of product service stuff. And then I kind of slowed down a little bit. I still had launches of things, but I feel like that kind of fell off a little bit, but then I feel like you increased in terms of product and services and like the variety of what you were offering.

And we had, we had kind of a. A switch there. Do you feel that way too? Yeah, a little bit. Uh, and I think some of that for me was that there was a little more clarity on what exactly I was offering and should be offering. Um, And it's, it's interesting because I, uh, I've mentioned in, I don't know the seasons of this podcast.

They all blend together in my brain this point, but in one of those, and I talked a little bit about video your way, which is, uh, um, you know, several part series where I offer a free email, um, series of, of eight weeks, um, that kind of walk people through the video making process. And then, uh, I built an accompanying workbook and I can, um, kind of a deeper consulting series around that.

And then the pandemic hit and everything changed. And so I, didn't never really got a chance to fully market that, but it's interesting because that's kind of coming back around now. So, um, there's some, some services that I offer are around consulting, uh, and just sort of advising people on how to take their organizations online.

And so now it's kind of interesting. Having already created the product and now having finally an opportunity to actually use it and to actually move it forward in a way that I hadn't necessarily planned when I built it, but that it is, uh, it is sort of finding some traction in a new and different way than I was than I was necessarily originally planning on.

Um, So that's been really interesting. I sort of like built the product before the, the audience. I sort of did the reverse of you a little bit, Katie, but, um, but yeah, I think in general, I've had a little more clarity, uh, and, and cohesion come together around what services I am offering. Um, Early on in the business.

I was a lot more, um, kind of all over the place. Maybe I feel like we were probably the same there. I mean, we it's like you just throw things around and see what sticks and like it's really. Yeah. Yeah. And that's just part of that phase, I think. And it's an important thing to go through. Um, and you know, all of that is to say, like, I don't do public speaking.

Any more really, but that's not to say I wouldn't again, or that I, uh, that I wouldn't come back to it in some way. Uh, it's just not a primary focus of my business right now. And the same is kind of true of, of online products. Like over the last six to eight months, it hasn't been a focus of mine at all.

Um, I'm, you know, still selling some things here and there, which is great, like little dribbles here and there I'll take it. Um, But, you know, th those skills that I learned in those, as you said, templates, things like that, that I've already built. I'm like, Oh, now I know how to apply this to this next thing.

That's coming down the line. So, you know, having had that experience really does give me, um, some confidence knowing that, you know, as things change over the next, you know, 12 to 14 months or so, um, with pandemic restrictions and all of that, like I have these other. Skills that I've already kind of cultivated, even though I cultivated them in kind of a haphazard way.

You know, there are things that I can rely on and pivot back to if I need to. Um, but in terms of, of current service design, you know, I've got a pretty, pretty clear idea of what services I offer and what, what things I'm not, you know, as, as likely to be able to meet someone's needs on. And, and that clarity has been really helpful in kind of designing that and scaffolding that time.

well, and this idea of like, like when you said, just because I'm not speaking now, doesn't mean I won't in the future. I feel like there is this, I mean, this year. Yeah. I've seen maybe more than any other year. Um, and it was partially because of the pandemic and kind of crisis response stuff. What I had to do at work, I had skills from like early days of my career, like swing back around and I was like, Oh, like, that's why I learned all this stuff about course design.

That's what I learned, you know, like, and some of it has definitely been useful in the business. But I had this moment, this year where I was asked to like rapidly create a program. And it was basically modeled after something I had done, you know, like almost 10 years ago. And I was like, Oh my God. Like the, you know, at that prepared me for this moment of being able to like step into this role in a very like rapid, you know, situation and, and do this crisis response.

And so I feel like there is this sense. That over time, like you've described, I feel like I've built confidence and I feel like this is what you're saying too, is like, we, we have this like toolbox. Of things. And just because you like stop doing one of those things consistently, it doesn't mean the tool is not there anymore.

It's like, you've shelved it for a little while. So I also feel like I'm not going to be speaking. I mean, especially during this COVID period, I'll, I'll be going almost two years, um, with no travel, no speaking on a campus, I've done some virtual speaking, but you know, no, no, like going to a campus and I don't know what that will look like after all this is over.

But, or after it dies down, I don't feel though that like, I'm rusty, you know, like it's not like I've lost that set of skills. I still know how to design a keynote. I still know how to command a room. In some ways the virtual events I've been leading have been giving me a, a more nuanced understanding about how to do interaction and you know, all those kinds of things.

So it's, that's a really interesting thing to think about that. You've got me kind of, you know, uh, reflecting on when you think about product and service design is there is this evolution, but it's like, you're building on things as you go, and it just makes you stronger and stronger and stronger within your business, within your career.

However you want to frame it. Yeah, I totally agree. Um, you know, I, I suspect in a year or two years, if we were to reflect back again, we'd be like, remember that time in the pandemic. When we talked about this and now look at all the skills we built in the meantime and things were coming back to, it's just an iterative process and it continues that way.

Um, and I think that's reflected in, in both of our, uh, developments and how we offer. Products and services and how, you know, how that comes across. Um, Katie, I'm curious if you have any sort of thoughts on how, um, not only the changes in, in how you've done products and services and design those things, but also how that has maybe come across in your, in your brand or, um, how thinking about products and services maybe shifted a brand representation or anything like that kind of strike for you.

Yeah. I mean, it's all shifted. I think that, you know, I was thinking about, I mean, I, there are a lot of times where this, I get kind of, I'm reminded of that really days of my business and like where I started and where I am now. And for example, we started with a webinar product. And so I did, you know, this annual webinar series.

That at the time, I mean, I look back and I'm like, wow, you were kind of stupid and how you designed it. And then I was like, here's nine months of webinars. I mean, I, you know, plantarly knee was like, here's nine month programming. And there are so many ways it could have been like disrupted or, I mean, I just, but I was like, no, let me lay out this almost a year long program and then run it like two years in a row.

And, you know, um, but it was what made the most sense to me to kind of pivot from speaking to large audiences to doing it online. And, and that was what I knew at the time was, was keynoting and, and doing workshops and things like that. So to take it into a virtual environment and to have a bunch of my former clients.

You know, who had gone to their campuses buy into it. I mean, that felt natural. Like that, that felt like, uh, it would make sense, but then very quickly after that pivoting to, uh, coaching and I feel like the, the keynoter identity was not one that I really took on. I mean, I did it and I feel like I did it well, and I feel like I did it pretty consistently for a long time.

Um, But there are people I know who are like, they are speakers, you know, like that, that is like who they are. That is the business. They run, they are super, you know, into that craft. And I wanted to make sure I did it well, but I wasn't like super passionate about it as a thing. And, and to the point where, like I hired a keynote coach to like help me design a recent keynote couple of years ago.

And you know, like I was, I was into like developing myself, but not, you know, in a way that I think some other people are. Coaching to me felt like stepping into an identity that I already was kind of in, but I was really like claiming it in a very important way. And partially, because in my, for people who don't know my background, I started out in faculty development, which is basically coaching.

We don't call it that, but we call it instructional consultation, but it's basically coaching, but I was not trained formally credentialed, you know, as a coach at that time. But when I went to training and became credentialed, there was a lot of overlap with what I had done for years. Um, and. So it's like this interesting experience of experiencing something for a long time and kind of getting an in-depth knowledge of it, particularly from an experiential perspective, and then circling back to it years later and having a different angle.

So it's like going back and like visiting your childhood neighborhood and you're like, wow, everything looks, so it looks smaller, you know, like you, you just have this different perspective. And I feel like that's kind of how I feel when I think back to. Some of these products and services that I was designing early on is like right now, they're such a smaller part of what I do and who I am as a business owner.

So I think that stepping into that coaching identity did shift my brand a lot. I think people identify with me being a coach now, you know, when they see me in different spaces, That's really how I show up. And even in things like keynoting, I really shifted what that looked like. And, uh, even with the virtual events this year, the topics I chose were very coachy.

Um, they were not like situating me as an expert, which is how my brand started. So that pivot has been a big deal. And I think that it's really shown up in a lot of my services and products. I think you see it on my website. I think how I talk about my work and the content marketing, and we're going to get into, I think marketing, you know, in a different way later on in the season, but yeah.

Um, I think that it's, it goes back to what you said Sarah, about like settling in to. What I call your life's purpose. This is part of my radical self-trust. So that's a whole other thing I found radical self-trust, which was like, or I defined it rather, which also pivoted my business toward this kind of coaching space.

So when all of that happened, you know, I see kind of the culmination of radical self-trust work is settling into your life's purpose and really all the coaching stuff that I've done, including the coach training work. Is that, I mean, like, it is such a fit. For who I am and what I want to do and what I want to bring into the world and the unique contribution that I feel like I can make, um, that it really did change how I was representing myself and, and the kinds of things that I started to give my attention to in terms of creating new products and services.

Yeah. Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. And it's been, it's been fun watching that, that journey and like being a small part of it kind of like poking in every, every few months for our, for our company. Uh, because yeah, I, I, I definitely saw that shift happening. Um, and the other thing I have, at least from my perspective that I I've seen, which has been really interesting, um, to watch about, about your progression, Katie, is that, um, You know that, that shift to coaching, but also that, like you're known for a lot of different things.

And though you may have one or two kind of identities that, that rise to the surface, um, for, for people, I think like the thing that has been really interesting for me and inspiring for me is that you've still sort of also held onto this multipotentialite. Oh, yeah. Well, you're a coach, but you're also lists several other things that you do and that you do quite well.

And so for somebody, uh, you know, for somebody like me who is also, you know, identifies that way as, as being good at a lot of different things and wanting to help people in a lot of different modalities, like it's nice to know that you can kind of. Set your brand and set your, the tone of your business in a particular direction or in a particular way, and kind of define it, but that you can also still shift and add and adapt things.

Um, kind of as you go along in a way that still fits authentically within the larger scope of your identity and of your brand and, and of who you choose to be. So yeah, it's been, it's been fun watching you sort of settle into who you are now. Yeah, it was fun doing it too. And I haven't even mentioned like the yoga pivot, which was like a whole situation in 2020, and super fun to like layer that in, you know, to the coaching and think about that.

I mean, I think that that's, I get a lot of questions in slow hustle from people who are like, what happens if you evolve and you have this brand that's built around you and I'm like, well, then your business evolves and your clients evolve. I mean, easy, simple, simple answer. Like this is what I've gone through the whole time.

I mean, it's not that it's like totally comfortable the whole time it's happening, but like, right. I just because I share so much of what I do in terms of process, it's not shocking to people when I start layering these things into the business, because they're like, well, obviously Katie's obsessed with yoga.

So let's, you know, put it together a coaching and yoga package, or let's do a yoga and planning retreat. I mean, like, it just, it becomes kind of an obvious and if it's not a fit for them, you know, they, they melt off and they find other people who are, you know, a better fit. But I think the part of it is.

Having that it is radical. Self-trust it's like having that confidence of like, you're going to do your thing. And some people are really going to connect with you, but I can also say in just like the last couple of months, what's been really interesting. I've had a couple of people contact me either through like email or like they came to the retreat that I ran and they explicitly said you are modeling how to do academia your way.

Like you, I can see it. And it's such like, and they said like, it's really helpful for me to see how you are having a full-time job and you're doing the yoga stuff, and you're doing these other things that are like this mind body balance, which we often don't find in academia, we're in our heads so much, which is a huge thing that draws me to that work.

But it was really interesting because it's like, whenever you get those kinds of messages from people, you know, there's other people who just haven't taken the time to email you, but they're thinking the same thing. And. That was really like, that was a moment where I was like, okay, good. Because part of what I think I am trying to do is to say, you can do what you want.

You can do this on your own terms. That's part of what I coach people around the values piece, the alignment piece. It's like, you don't have to like bend, you know, to these expectations that are not aligned with what you want to do. And if I can model that for people. Okay. I mean like that, that's a huge part of the work.

So I'm curious though, Sarah, how you feel about this? Because I do feel like you, you did a really explicit. Pivot, you know, I feel like in some ways I blend them in over time and it's like, people wake up one day and they're like, how did we get from here to here? Like, I don't know that people always see the connection, but with you, it was like, you had a very explicit, like I'm shutting the door on this.

I'm I'm shifting over here. And you were pretty open about it, you know, about what you were doing and why, how has that affected things for you? Um, That's an interesting question. And one, I haven't given a ton of thought to, at one point when we were, you know, between recording sessions here, we were talking a little about, you know, I was saying like, I haven't done a whole lot of reflecting on the last six to eight months cause I haven't had a whole lot of time to do so.

So this is great. I get to like, I think on the spot, how does this affect me? I don't know. Um, so listeners, you are hearing the, uh, hot takes that I've got here. Um, you know, I think, I think for me, the, the lead up to the pivot, it was some of the most important kind of thought and reflection work I've I've ever done.

Um, as an individual and as a business owner, as a person, um, you know, there was, there was a lot of personal stuff I was also wrestling with in that time. And so. In a lot of ways. It was, it was very helpful timing to have the, um, the business kind of be quiet during, during that time and to not have, you know, to have work, to do, but not have so much that I was, you know, completely overwhelmed because I was able to do some of that reflection and some of that, um, that work on my own, you know, mental health kinds of concerns and those sorts of things.

So, you know, I think all of that. Really led to this kind of realization that I wasn't totally in alignment with, with what I wanted to be doing and where I wanted it to be going. And, um, and how I felt like my skills and talents could be, you know, added to the world in invaluable ways. And so. For me, the lead up to the pivot was sort of that, that hard crunchy tension time where it was like, Oh, I don't know how this is going to all shake out.

But then after, and Katie, I think I've talked to you and maybe, maybe even said on the podcast before, after I made that decision, it was just sort of like, Oh, Okay, this is, yes, this is what it's supposed to happen. Like, even though I had no certainty of really like hurt, I had like, as a client, I had, you know, not a whole lot of work lined up.

I had some ideas about how to, how to move things in which direction to go and all of that. Um, but I didn't. I didn't have any assurances that it was going to work out, but there was still sort of this like, settling, like, okay, who like, yes, this is the right choice. Even if I, even if I'm uncertain about it, even if it's uncomfortable, even if I'm not.

Like a hundred percent sure this is going to work. This feels more like where I need to be. And so pivoting more into the consulting and into, um, helping people think about using video and other sorts of digital ways to engage with each other. Um, that has been. You know, that was an intentional shift. And one that was also very fortuitously timed.

It turns out, uh, because suddenly then everybody needed to figure that out very quickly in 2020. So, um, I sort of chuckle that, uh, when I, when people ask me about it and I sort of laugh a little and I'm like, wow, it was kind of right place, right time. But also there was a lot of preparation that went into that, that pivot that allowed me to be in the right place at the right time.

And. Had I not been kind of doing that work and making that conscious choice to, to change and to go in a different direction. I don't know that I'd be where I am right now and working with the same kinds of clients that I'm working with right now. So. You know, all of that work and all of that, that reflection, and that time spent, um, really wrestling with where do I want to be and how do I, how do I want to present in the, in the world of, of business and you know, what kind of work do I want to do and how big do I want it to be?

And what's enough for me, you know, all these questions that we've been talking about. Um, it throughout the podcast, the whole whole series, as well as this season, you know, that it has prepared me really well to be able to kind of take this next thing in stride and to really kind of come into my own in a, in a way that I.

Was not necessarily expecting to happen in 2020, but it was like a weirdly pleasant surprise, which is a weird thing to say in 2020. But you know, that, that was kind of where it landed for me. So I'm very grateful for that. Um, but yeah, I think it just, it's been an interesting journey as I think about it, like all the, all the different things that have led to this and, and that really intentional pivot being kind of a main turning point for, for me and my.

Confidence in my business, frankly, so well, and I feel like there is, I don't know. I, you know, it's, it's interesting. I don't even know what I believe about this, but like sometimes you see these synchronicities just like, I don't know how to explain it. Yeah. I mean, you, I think about, you know, when we decided to move here to Kansas and it was like, We bought and sold a house on the same day.

Like it was like the path was cleared, everything that could have gone wrong when right. I mean, it was like, it was just crazy. And, and we were both just like, this is amazing, you know, that this is working out in the way that it's working out. And to me, it's like, I I'm the person that takes that kind of stuff in and says there's meaning there, you know, like that it kind of shores me up.

It gives me some affirmation to say, you know, this is the right direction. I don't know. Like you're saying, I don't know why. I don't know what it's meant to happen. I don't know what exactly. But then, you know, to go back to this thing that I was mentioning earlier about having to do like the rapid, you know, um, creation of this thing in my day job, because of the pandemic, I have felt the same feeling that I was like, this is why I'm here.

Because no one, like I was the person that they needed to come in and create this thing for this community in this time. And of course I did it in a team and it was not all me, but I had a lot of knowledge that I brought to that moment and a lot of experience and it did help, you know, like I could see the clear puzzle piece of like where I was fitting into that situation.

It's helpful to me to look for that in my business too, to be like, you know, and I think about the same thing, you know, just a final example is like coach training launched January, 2020, and then the pandemic hit. And the first cohort that went through that coach training has the tightest relationships like they have had, they were such a support to each other.

They've met for two hours almost every week of this entire year. Like a good chunk of them went through the entire curriculum together and. That for many of them was like, it was life changing. Like they, they had to, they had not just this new skill set, not this, just this new identity of being a coach, but they had these relationships in this community together and it helped them to like cope with everything that was happening.

And yeah, I was like, yes, this is why this, this is why this launch this year. Like, this is why I like the timing of all of that worked out. Why all of those people came into that particular cohort, you know, like there, I just, I think that those things. Matter. And like I said, I don't have a way of explaining it.

I don't have a spiritual system behind it. You know, like that's not really what I'm talking about, but just, I think we can have that lens when we look at our businesses and there is a kind of confidence that comes out of seeing those affirmations and being like, okay, yeah, this is making sense why this is coming together in this way.

Yeah. It's interesting. I totally agree with you that there's there are these moments of synergy that just feel. Bigger than happenstance, you know, bigger than coincidence. Um, and I know there's a lot of there's a lot that goes into preparing for. Preparing to be ready for the opportunity to fall in your lap kind of thing.

You know, I know there's, there's a lot of kind of perspective on that. Um, but you know, I also think there's, there's an element to which, and, and I'm appreciating this even more now that I'm working more with, uh, in the arts and with, with arts clients, that there is something. That is really, life-changing about creating connection with other people.

And whether that's through what you're talking about with, with coach training and having that cohort of people who just at the right time, they were all there in that moment. And it just was the right thing that they all needed. Or whether you're talking about creating a piece of art that just hit somebody at the right spot at it, just when they need it.

Um, and, and I think a lot about that with respect to the pandemic, because there are so many, like so many people are grieving so much right now and, and have lost so much. And. I know for artists, it's a really hard time, especially choral artists who can't meet with each other and saying like, that's one of our main kind of coping strategies to deal with life is, is gathering and singing together.

But finding those ways to. Uh, share music creatively and, and with each other, even in a virtual space, there are those moments that just allow people that space to grieve and also allow that space to feel connection again. And so whenever I'm thinking about any of my work right now, especially like connection is at the center of it because that's what we're all missing.

It's what we all need. And I think there are so many different ways to create that, whether that is through, you know, a coach training or whether that is through a really, you know, beautifully put together a choral program online or whatever that is. Um, for me, I, I think connection is kind of the most important thing I would argue just in general, but especially right now.

And so it's been a real joy to be a part of helping people figure out how to make those connections in this time and how to maintain them. Um, And if I can do that through my services. Great. Happy to love it. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, this is something that I feel like, I mean, it's so interesting how much of this comes down to instinct for me, because I feel that way about when I created prolific, which originally was, so my writing group members had a way to stay connected to each other because it was originally about writing a publication.

And then I expanded it out to be more about meaningful productivity in general, in higher ed and academic spaces. But. What's happened is it's become this kind of soft place to land for all of my clients. Basically, if you buy a product, you know, a coaching package or, you know, you're in one of my cohorts for anything really, you, you get a free lifetime membership to prolific.

It's just part of what you get from working with me. So we've got, you know, I dunno 115 people in there. Some of them just buy it cause you can, you know, with others of them are my clients past present. Um, but it's become this like really interesting space. Last year, we started doing these monthly goals and intention setting sessions.

And then this year I layered in weekly planning sessions because I was hearing from my clients that they really wanted to do the weekly planning. And so I was like, well, let's just layer that into prolific. We do reading groups. I mean, there's a bunch of stuff, writing retreats everything's happening in there.

And. It has been such an interesting thing to see my clients connect with each other and have these like deep relationships virtually. Some of them live by each other too. So they've met up face-to-face pre pandemic. They did. And then also to see the cohorts supporting each other in that space, because they have private groups within that space that they get to connect with each other.

And. I mean, part of me is like, how did I even know as an introvert? I mean, everyone wants a sense of belonging, you know? I mean, I understand that this, and I feel like I, I, I, that was the instinct was like belongingness and like trying to help people to have that, but it was also recognizing that other people needed that in a way that I didn't, you know, because I, I really am a solitary creature.

I mean, like, I think I've talked about this in a lot of different places. I am an introvert introvert. Like if I'm enough solitude time, I will choose it any day of the week. Um, but it has been so, um, rewarding. For me to connect people. And I think part of it, selfishly is like, well, if you're connected to each other, then I can like step back and like have my solitude time because you're being taken care of over there.

And you're like taking care of each other in a way that I don't have to caretake you because it's, you know, it's, you're getting it from this other place. But it has ended up being this incredible gift. And so many people reached out to me at the end of 2020 and just said like, thank you for this community.

Like, this has really helped me through 2020. It's helped me to have this, you know, relationships and, and we see each other weekly because of these planning meetings. And it's just, again, like, I, I just think about like, sometimes you have these kernels. And I don't know. I remember we recorded an episode. I don't remember which season it was, but it was like over a weekend.

I was like, uh, making prolific and I like, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. Like I created the community. I launched it. I mean, it was like in a three-day period. It's like, I had the idea and I executed it. I mean, it was like, and I remember I came back to the show and I was like, so I've launched this thing. It's called prolific.

And then we were like talking about it and you're like, well, you know, obviously this would be what you would do. But I mean, I, I think about baby business ne. Doing that, you know, three years ago now, I think, and now mature, mature, not mature, but mature business need is like good on you that you like had that kernel.

And you didn't even really know what it was, but like some of the things that I've decided in my business, I didn't fully understand, but like a part of me knew a part of me was like, you need to do it, do it. And my partner. Sometimes I jokingly call him an ER, because he's like, Very much, you know, he's a questioner, he's a, he's a rebel, he's a questioner.

Like he pushes back. You don't want a lot of the ideas I have. And he's always the one that's like, you know, what, if nobody shows up and I'm like, I can't think about that. Like, I just need to launch, like, don't, don't plant the seed. Like, let me just fly on the creative, creative energy here. But he and I have a lot of conversations about this, where I'm just like, you have got to trust my instincts because over and over again, I, I can't always explain it, but I know like part of me knows that this is something that we're supposed to do and trust me, you know?

And he does. I mean, it's like, I'm so thankful for that because I can't always say why, but it works out. And prolific is such a good example of that. Well, and I think, Hey, you're talking, you're speaking very well about this idea of like planting seeds in your business, right? Like you, like you said, however many years ago, whenever that was that you created prolific, like you felt that, that this needed to happen, this needed to be a thing.

And so you made it kind of just trusting that it would come to fruition in some way. And even if that. And if prolific itself had like not. Become what it has become if it had like petered out or whatever, or, you know, people hadn't shown up. The fact of the matter is those still are important seeds to plant, right?

Like you still learn a lot in the process of creating something. Even if that's something doesn't go the direction you thought it would, in your case, it went a direction. That was completely kind of different than you thought when you first created it, but turned out to be this really rich and vibrant place.

And not that you weren't planning that, but like what was better than I could've imagined because of the magical Dawn. Yeah. Yeah. It took on a new life and something that you never could have predicted. And like, so for those of you who are like, well, should I do this thing? I don't know. You know, like try stuff you never know early in your business, what, you know, what's going to actually.

Come around again and yeah. Yeah. Well, and I I'm curious, Sarah, if there are products and services right now that you are feeling like really energized by like the stuff that you're like, I maybe even like, I'm not sure where this is headed, but I'm like really invested in like following the energy here and seeing where this goes.

Yeah. I mean, there are a couple of things. Um, and frankly, some of it is just like, I just need some time to do the things. Um, but you know, I'm also dealing with, with having a lot of client demand, which is great. Um, but there are a couple of things, again, kind of looking forward to when I need to kind of shift and pivot again, I've got a few ideas kind of in the percolating, in the background.

Um, And one of them I'm, I'm really excited about. Cause it's, it's working with, um, my colleague and friend, uh, Adam Brunwald he's. Um, I mentioned in the previous episode, somebody I've been partnering with a lot on a lot of different things. Um, and he, uh, one of his main clients is actually an arts council for the entire state of Minnesota, where, where we are and.

So we're consulting with a bunch of different arts organizations and kind of helping them through thinking about you. Have you have something that you want to take online in some way or another, and thinking about from the initial idea, all the way through launching your. Event, your program, your offering, whatever it is in an online space, what are, what's the steps in between and what do you need to be thinking about?

And what's the tech and what's the planning and whose needs to be involved. And, you know, all of those elements of sort of strategically planning, launching a new product or project or event or that sort of thing in an online space. What do you need to be doing? And, um, so through that coaching with, uh, with a couple of other, um, con or other consultants, there are four of us, a team of four of us kind of working with these arts groups individually.

I'm also thinking about, okay, so how do we make a product out of this? Because we're going to learn so much about what it is that people and artists, individual artists, and, and small arts organizations need. And then how do we take that and package it in a way that other. You know, arts organizations across the country or across the world could, could benefit from.

Uh, what we've learned from this process and, and from our own knowledge that we're already bringing to the table. So I'm, you know, I'm already noodling like, Hmm. How do we build that? Cause that will be, uh, that'll be something I think that will be, um, a value for groups that are. Are thinking about how do I do this next thing online in a different way.

And so, um, that's what I'm excited about. Kind of thinking about in terms of the product side of things for, um, for services, you know, a lot of what I'm going to be doing this spring is doing virtual events for people. And whether that is fundraisers, uh, or whether that's online concert programs or other kinds of.

Conferences and gatherings and we weekend long retreats and you know, all of those kinds of things I'm thinking about, how do you use the visual, the virtual space, um, effectively to do what you want to do? Um, you know, I just had, uh, had an event this, this last weekend that was. A full day long kind of thing.

And I was like, that is a long time. Um, but it was a, it was a great day full of, you know, different kinds of sessions and things. And, and so thinking with clients, um, individually on what are your goals and how are you reaching that? And, and what kinds of things do you want to offer to your audience? Um, I love thinking about those questions and I love thinking about.

How, how best to use technology to our advantage or to, to the client's advantage. So, um, you know, those kinds of services are what I'm most excited about kind of moving forward into 2021 here. So that's, that's me. What about you? What are you looking forward to in terms of products or services that you're working on right now?

Yeah, well, I mentioned the project management one, which is. Slowly unfurling. And, and I'm kind of getting more clarity on what it's looking like. And the funny part is, um, I'm not going to say what the name is, but it's a name that I've been thinking about for years. And it's actually one that I pitched to you as when we rebranded academic egg is make your way I pitched this name and you're like, no, that's not the right fit.

And I've been trying to find a right fit for this name for like years and years. I think that's going to be this program. Like, I think this is what I'm naming it. I'm like, okay, this is like it's so, so that kind of stuff, it's so fun when that comes together, when I've like had this thing and prolific was another one of those words where it was like, I really wanted to build something around this concept of being prolific.

So I will often like sit with something for years before I'm like, where does this fit? Like, how is this working? Um, so that's something that I'm kind of trying to think about is that, that project management piece. And then I immediately had people reach out and say, Well, you have something that can be for teams.

And I was like, well, okay. Uh, well, yes, I guess you layer that in. So I'm thinking about that and that kind of led me to, to people, um, the, another credential around kind of team-based project management, you know, which I'm working on right now. And so, so that's an area that I'm like building out and trying to figure out.

And the other piece that's been kind of interesting related to that. Is, I have had people reaching out recently and not because of anything. Well, obviously I'm putting something out. That's like bringing them in to me, but not like an explicit package that I have where teams are approaching me and saying, will you do a coaching package for like our team?

And like around like a grant, we're all working on together. But like, will you kind of coach us as a team and maybe do some individual stuff? And so I've been putting together these kinds of like proposals for these. Groups, you know, that are coming together and wanting me to do some of that. So that is like interesting.

Like I'm, I'm kind of noodling on that a little bit and trying to figure out, like, is that an actual package that I want to put together? That's like, I will coach you, you as a team. And I will coach individuals. And like, what does that look like? Um, so that's the situation that I'm kind of trying to think through.

And then the other thing that's kind of percolating right now, as I am. Uh, starting the process of writing my next book, which I've hired a coach actually to help me think through. And, um, it's really early stages really early. I am like not even with a concrete outline of like, what is this going to be?

But that is something that I think is really tied in with my coaching work. It's really tied in with a lot of what I've already worked with clients on. So that's, that's in the works. Um, And then the other thing that's happening this year is really just a kind of little expansion of the coach training program.

And then I added another cohort. So I'm curious to see how that works and if I'm able to fill, you know, three of these cohorts, um, 2020 was kind of an anomalous year, you know, in so many ways. And I was shocked that we filled both of our cohorts. Um, and January we had a slightly lower number. So I'm kind of curious what it's gonna look like in April and June when I do these other cohorts.

So that's, I think the other piece I'm like rapidly in my mind, like running through what else is going on. I mean, holistic is definitely like, you know, being nurtured and it's growing. But I feel like those are the main areas that I'm starting to more explicitly build in kind of some of the team-based stuff, the project management stuff into the work, and yeah, it's stretching me a little bit.

So that's good. You know, like when I got the PMP, it was, it was definitely kind of a stretch and it felt good to like deep dive into something where I could really learn and she wants some material. So I'll be curious to hear. Oh, and the other thing I would say it's not 2021. I think it's more 20, 22 is I want to do an in-person retreat.

And so the, the virtual retreat that I did in December slash January, um, earlier this year and at the end of last year, Was kind of a trial run. Like I really wanted to see how that would go. And there was a lot of interest and we had, we had two kind of full retreat groups for that, and it was a combo yoga planning for the new year retreat.

And I don't know what my face-to-face one would be, but it would definitely be like a yoga, something. So that's something that I think 20, 21, you know, I just don't think we're going to be in a place where I can do that, but I have started scouting. Um, possible retreat locations that are local to me. And, you know, I would love to try something with that and I'm just not entirely sure what it will look like.

Um, but that could be also something, you know, thinking about kind of the team-based stuff. Maybe that's a possibility as like bringing a team to a location and, and working with them on a project. Like what would that look like? So, so that's some of the percolation preview. Lots of cool stuff in the horizon.

Yay. I love it. Oh, I know. I love talking. Drew it too. Anything else we want to talk about in this episode, Sarah, about product and service design? I don't think so. I'm just, I'm enjoying getting creative and staying creative and using the skills and things that. I've built before in ways that I did not expect.

Yeah. Well, it's fun to see how we both kind of come through this journey because I think we both come kind of a long way with this one. And we've been here like every step of the way for the other one, you know, like just watching it and being a witness to it. And that's been really fun to see. It's been cool.

Yay. All right. Well until the next episode, Sarah, thank you for another good chat. Thank you, Katie delightful is always thanks for listening to this episode of make your way show notes and a transcript for this episode can be found at Dr. Katie linder.com backslash M Y w. If you found this episode helpful, please consider rating or reviewing the show in Apple podcasts.

Thanks for listening.