You're listening to You've Got This, episode 361.

Welcome to You've Got This, a weekly podcast for higher education professionals looking to increase their confidence and capacity for juggling the day-to-day demands of an academic life.

I'm your host, Dr.

Katie Linder.

On this episode, I'm finally revealing the 2023 project that I talked about at the very beginning of the year and I've been teasing it throughout the year, this is the project that I decided to work on as a gift to myself for my 40th birthday, which is in 2023.

And I'm telling you what it is today.

And I would say there's probably a lot of questions that you might have about this.

Maybe not, but what I'm planning to do is do a part one and a part two.

So I'm going to have a couple of episodes talking about this, really doing a deeper dive into the content of this project.

And so if you have questions after listening to this episode, feel free to email me in the next week or so and I can try to embed some things into the next episode as well if you have things you want to hear about.

So this project in August of 2022, I decided to start another master's degree.

And so this was actually a partially 2022 into 2023 project.

And what I'm going to tackle on the episode today is why did I do this?

That's a big question with everything going on.

Why did I do this?

How did I pick the program?

What were some of the courses and content of the program that I chose?

What was like the easiest part, the hardest part, my favorite part, my least favorite part, and also this concept of like, why did I keep this a secret?

So I'm going to tackle that in part one.

In part two, I'm going to talk all about time management.

And so if there are other questions you want to ask about, I am going to dig into how did I fit this into my schedule?

What was my process for kind of breaking this down into ways that I could actually do it, motivation to keep going when it didn't, when it, you know, felt kind of hard, and also like my important takeaways and things like that.

So feel free to send along even more questions, but those are the kinds of things that I'm going to cover in this episode and the next episode.

So let's start with the why.

Why did I decide that I wanted to do another master's program?

So I would say starting in 2022, and just to kind of remind you of the timeline here, August of 2022 was pre taking on like the big budget project that I did at work and also pre me shifting into my more expanded role.

So this is when I was still in kind of the original role that I was hired for and I had what I felt at the time were some gaps in my knowledge and I wanted to just gain some more confidence in particular areas.

And where this first started for me was thinking about some things related to kind of like human resources and HR.

And I started by kind of looking at some credentials and thinking like, do I want to do like, there's an exam for, you know, HR professionals and other ways that I could kind of formalize that learning if I wanted to do it.

And you all know how much I love a credential.

Um, and so I started to kind of look around at that.

And when I started to kind of do a deeper dive there, it kind of raised the question for me of am I actually looking for something more?

Um, am I actually looking for something that's not just kind of the logistics of HR, but something deeper?

And then I started to look into programs that were focused on things like organizational development and, uh, leadership.

And I happened to find a program, um, that I felt was a good fit for a lot of the gaps in knowledge that I was trying to fill.

Now I looked through several different programs and I want to to talk about like what I was looking for and what I was not looking for.

So I was looking for things that I didn't know about already.

And so some of the leadership programs that I was looking at were programs that had, for example, modules on coaching.

And I was like, Nope, I don't really need to have a class on coaching.

I don't need to kind of pay for something that I already know about.

Um, and there were other ones that had, you know, specific topics and things that I just felt like I already knew I'd either gained it through experience, or it was not an area that I felt like I really needed to do a deep dive on.

But then I found an online program that had a bunch of different content pieces that I felt were really filling in the gaps.

And I'll talk a little bit about the coursework and what was included in this program in just a moment.

But this is a program that was defined as organizational leadership.

That was kind of the topic of the program.

And it didn't have too much overlap with the kinds of things that I felt like I already knew.

So that was one thing that I was really looking for was I didn't want to have a lot of overlap with content that I had already learned over time.

The other thing, of course, that I was really trying to figure out with this program was convenience.

How could I do this program when I had a full-time job, when I have the business, when I have all these other things.

So I knew I was looking for a fully online program.

Now, one of the questions you might be asking is why didn't I do a program at my current institution?

Because most institutions will offer you like a free course every term and things like that.

It's part of like a benefit package that you have when you work in higher education.

And this was a very explicit decision for me because the role that I have at my current institution, I oversee kind of faculty development and, um, like instructional consultation for faculty.

And I thought it would be very uncomfortable for any of our faculty to have me in their courses, um, and that that would just cause, you know, just like discomfort for them because I oversee areas of their training and things like that.

And, um, so I, I knew I was not going to do this at my own institution.

So I was definitely looking for something outside of my institution.

And I was looking for something that was going to be super convenient.

Um, and that would allow for me to do this primarily online.

And indeed I was able to find that.

The other thing that I was, um, not focused on was an institution that had some kind of like brand recognition or, you know, they, like, uh, they were like an Ivy league institution.

Like that was something that was not as important to me.

I did do my graduate work, both my master's degree and my PhD at an R one.

Um, I know what that experience is like, you know, I think it's great, you know, and, and I definitely understand why people might want to pursue that.

But at this point in my career, that was not the purpose of why I was going through this program.

It was not to kind of bolster my reputation because of the kind of institution I was attending.

It was more about, um, does this program have the content that I want to learn?

Can I learn it in the most convenient way possible?

And then of course the other piece I was looking at was cost.

Now one of the things that I appreciated about the program that I chose is the cost was very transparent.

It was very clear what the program was going to cost and what I was going to have to invest every roughly six weeks or so when I had a payment that I need to make for this program.

So all of those kinds of things, content, cost, and convenience, were the things that I was looking at.

Now the last thing that I had that I was keeping in mind was I wanted this to be a program that could benefit me both in my work, in my day job, but also potentially in my business.

And as I was thinking about the kinds of coaching that I do, especially with executive leaders, having kind of more theoretical background and practical background in things related to organizational leadership is also something that can kind of influence in a positive way the coaching that I do in my business.

So of course I can apply directly the things I'm learning in my day job, but I can also apply this to how I coach other leaders when I'm working in my coaching on the side.

So all of those things were kind of how I decided to pick this particular program.

So some of the courses in the program, just to give you kind of a sense of the content, were things like effective business communication, financial management for leaders.

There were actually several courses on finance and things like business statistics.

So I had a lot of that, of course, on human resource management, things like leadership ethics and theories of leadership, organizational behavior and change, and also things like leading virtual organizations.

So very focused on a lot of different components around leadership.

So another question you might be asking is, did I pay for this myself?

Or was this something that I did through my institution?

So I did pay for this out of pocket.

Again, this was kind of my gift to myself.

So it was an investment that I decided to make, of course, along with my partner, who fully supported me doing this.

But also, I actually chose not to tell my people at work.

So I was pretty strict about who knew about this and who did not know about this.

And I'll get to that more in a moment.

But this was actually something that I just very recently told my supervisors about.

So again, this was really just for me.

I really wanted to focus on this.

And so of course I paid for it myself.

So let me talk a little bit about kind of the easiest parts of this and the hardest parts of this.

This was something where, um, I had like a number of different things that I would get assigned each week, um, for these different courses.

And the easiest part that I can identify is each of these courses had like these little quizzes on the readings.

And there were videos that I would watch and transcripts that I would read for content that we were covering, you know, any given week.

And then there were these quizzes.

Those were probably the easiest parts for me because the quizzes were usually just a direct connection to like, what have you read?

Do you understand what you've read?

In some cases for more of the quant-focused classes, the quizzes were a little bit harder.

You know, you had to do some math and things like that, but in general I would say the easiest part was was that.

The hardest part for me of these courses were definitely the ones that were more focused on finance and statistics and quantitative topics.

This is something as someone trained in the humanities, you know, my graduate work is in women and gender studies, my undergraduate major was English, you know, like this I am NOT someone who has large amounts of quantitative training, although I've trained myself in this over time, but I would find some of the assignments that were more on the quantitative side were just harder for me to understand.

I didn't always understand the instructions and of course there were instructors that you could kind of reach out to and ask questions of, but those were the ones that I found myself getting the most frustrated with because I just felt like I didn't have kind of the fundamental capacity of understanding a lot of that content, whereas other courses that talked about like communication or other kinds of things were a little bit easier for me to process.

I also wanted to share a little bit about my favorite part of doing this and my least favorite part of doing this.

Um, my favorite part was definitely having curated readings on topics of interest.

So, um, there were readings associated with, you know, all the different courses.

And I had different things that I was reading each week on the different topics that we were covering.

And for the most part, I found these things to be really, really interesting.

This was like a whole body of literature that I've read, you know, a lot of things on leadership through like Harvard business review and things like that.

But I haven't really dug into kind of the peer reviewed kind of literature that you might see on these topics in different journals.

And I'm, I'm even like not really aware of the kinds of journals that, uh, people would be publishing in, in these areas.

So being able to do a deep dive on that was super fun.

Of course I love to read.

And so that was one of my favorite parts.

Now my least favorite part about program like this is, um, this is a program that had five week courses.

And so it was very rapid in terms of kind of like you had very concrete deadlines of what you would needed to do every single week.

And there were certain deadlines throughout the week and then certain deadlines at the end of the week.

And definitely my least favorite part was working to these deadlines every week, even when like I knew I needed a break.

So if I had had like a super hard week at work and I was like exhausted and I needed to like have some extra rest time, that Sunday night deadline was always there and I knew I needed to kind of carve out time to make sure I was doing that assignment.

Now in the part two episode of this, I'm going to talk a lot more about my time management strategies and how I kind of fit this in and what I needed to do in order to make this happen.

Um, but this was probably my least favorite part is I didn't feel like I had any wiggle room to do things late.

Now, of course, I could have taken the points off or whatever, but as somebody who's a type A personality wanting to do this well, wanting to really make sure I was devoting myself to this program, I was really careful about meeting deadlines and things like that.

So that was probably a little bit hard of just not having that flexibility to give myself time if I needed to do that.

So the last thing I'm going to tackle in this episode is who knew about this, and why did I keep it such a secret?

So basically my partner knew, obviously, he was aware that I was doing this.

I did tell one of my sisters, so she was aware.

I did not tell my parents.

I did not tell my bosses.

I really didn't talk about it with people at work.

So I had a couple of colleagues who are close to me that I did share this with.

So for example, my co-author of working on this project, he was aware that I was doing this because it was just part of my load that I was juggling as I'm working through things.

But I could probably count on one hand the number of people that were aware that this was going on in my life.

And let me talk about why.

Why I decided to keep this so close to the vest for this particular project.

In the beginning, I'm going to admit I wasn't sure that I could do it.

So I wanted to start by taking one class and just seeing how hard is this to build this into everything else I had going on.

And I was a little nervous that I was not going to be able to complete this entire thing over the 16 months or so of this program.

And so when I have things like that, I am a little bit nervous about announcing them more publicly because I want to follow through on the things that I'm trying to do.

So that was definitely one of the things.

And then I would also say, I started this program in August of '22, not too long after that, my responsibilities at work really started ramping up.

So it was kind of a bit of like checking in with myself after every class to say like, can I keep going?

Do I feel like I still have the capacity for this?

Um, so that was definitely a factor that I was considering here.

Another factor was I really wanted this to be just for me.

I feel like there's a lot of things that I share, you know, on the podcast and on the blog, things that I'm working on.

And this was something that felt very personal to me in terms of my own development as a leader and what I was learning about myself and what I needed to kind of like fill in in terms of my own gaps and in my leadership competencies.

I wanted to have a time to reflect on, you know, like what I'm trying to be as a leader and what does that mean in my job?

What does that mean for things like my business as well?

And so that just felt like very personal.

It felt like something that I wanted to not necessarily be telling other people about, but just kind of like focusing on it myself.

And then the third thing that I'll say was kind of a factor for me as well was I feel like sometimes, and actually this just happened this week, somebody emailed me about something and I saw this happening.

I feel like sometimes folks who listen to the podcast or who read my blog do a little bit of comparison of like what I'm doing versus what they're doing.

And that's completely fine.

But also I think sometimes people forget that I have just different life circumstances that allow me to do maybe more things than other people, or I don't have kids, for example.

And so I have certain things that I bring into my life that other people, I never want the things that I do to make other people feel badly about what they're choosing to do in their lives.

And I definitely had this moment when I knew I was going to do this master's degree where I thought, I don't want anyone to compare themselves to me doing this and say, how is it that she can find time to do this and I can't?

Because I know we all have different constraints on our time, different priorities, different obligations.

And, um, that comparison game is really real, especially on places like social media.

And so that was something that I was really thinking about was I felt like if I was going to be updating on this over time, it might be something that could end up making someone feel kind of badly about kind of their own professional development.

And so I wanted to really emphasize, uh, which I did, of course, throughout the year, that this was really a personal kind of gift to myself.

And it wasn't something that I'm really using to kind of like boost my reputation or, you know, like it's, it's a credential is that is one of the more personal credentials that I've ever earned.

I would put it right up there with like my yoga credential, which is very personal to me in terms of kind of what I was hoping to do with that.

Um, and so, uh, that was another reason why I felt like I needed to keep it a little bit, um, quieter in terms of kind of, uh, this achievement that I was working toward over the last 16 months or so.

So I know this is a bit of a longer episode.

I expect the next one to be a little bit longer as well, but the, just as a reminder, what I'm going to dive into next time, definitely a lot more of the time management stuff.

What were some of the tips and tricks and strategies and tactics that I used to build this in?

I'm going to talk a little bit about kind of my schedule and how I was able to do this with everything else that I had going on.

I'll talk a little bit more about the structure of the program, the kinds of assignments that I had to do, my process when I was approaching each new course, like how I kind of prepped myself for that and get into a lot of the nitty gritty of how I actually made this happen, because there are some of you who might be thinking about this and thinking about, you know, structuring in some more formalized learning for yourself.

And I definitely want to share some of my tips and strategies for how I saw that working well.

So, um, this project wraps up this month.

I'm officially closing out my last couple of courses in mid-December.

And it's something that I'm so glad that I did.

I will definitely talk next time too about like, was this worth it and why?

Um, so until part two, feel free to send me any of your questions.

You can always email me at hello@drkatylinder.

com.

I always love to hear from you and I'll continue with more details about this on the next episode.

Thanks so much for listening.

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