

00:00:00 Welcome to the hair of the dog podcast today. My guest is Megan Murray from Megan Murray photography, and we are going to be talking all about taking calculated risks from how to leave that corporate job to when to work for quote free and a whole bunch of other things to think about whenever you are trying to build your business and possibly even leave that corporate job and become a full-time pet photographer.

00:00:27 Stay tuned. Welcome to the hair of the dog podcast. If you're a pet photographer, ready to make more money and start living a life by your design, you've come to the right place. And now your host pet photographer, travel addicts, chocolate martini connoisseur, Nicole Begley. Hey everybody. Nicole here from hair of the dog. And I am here today with my special guest,

00:00:53 Megan Murray from Megan Murray photography down in Houston, Texas. She is also one of our coaches inside of elevate and Megan was a student of mine way back in the day. Oh my gosh. Megan, do you remember what year that Florida The retreat was? I think, yes. I do know because I was pregnant at the time with my second daughter. It was 2015.

00:01:14 Oh my gosh. Six years ago. That's insane. Well, welcome to the podcast, Megan, what a fun six years of spin. Well, thanks. I call, it's always a pleasure talking with you. I love it. I love it. So, yeah. So I guess let's give everybody a little bit of your backstory. When I first met you,

00:01:31 when you came to the hair of the dog retreat, you're still working for corporate should engineer thinking about wanting to move over and do your own thing. So yeah. Just give us a little bit of your, of your story and your journey. Yeah, sure. Yeah. I went to college for engineering and I actually worked as a chemical engineer in chemicals and oil and gas for about 15 years before I finally moved to photography.

00:01:55 Full-time and you know, like so many people, I think you kind of get in this projectory of your life where you kind of do what's expected of you next it's like go to school, you know, meet the right person, get married, work at career eventually, you know, get a few dogs and then maybe have kids. And, you know,

00:02:14 I think I was just kind of going down that path, but I've always had kind of that entrepreneurial spirit and, you know, looking for something that would just allow me some more freedom. But yeah, I actually really enjoyed engineering work. It was just, you know, I came to a point after I had two kids that just kind of lost my mojo for the corporate world and yeah,

00:02:34 I was looking for a new challenge, so I love it. I love it. So what was that like that, well, first of all, how long did it take you to get to that, that decision that it was like, Oh my gosh, it's time to go. And what was that? Like? I can only imagine that it's,

00:02:47 you know, the one hand of, Oh, corporate benefits, good paycheck. Oh, freedom. But, Oh my gosh. The seems really scary. Yes, absolutely scary. And it's really to walk away from a secure, constant paycheck with all those benefits. You're exactly right. I, so when I met you back in 2015, I did not have a website.

00:03:11 I kind of wasn't even sure if I was going to go down the business route with my photography, it was more of a hobby at that point. And it was, it took me about three years to actually

make the leap into full-time photography. So it was the fall of 2018 when I did that. Yeah. Nice. Nice. And then what,

00:03:32 what had to be in place? Like what, what caused you to feel like, okay. It was, it was time, like, was there a certain revenue goal you wanted to hit or number of clients? What did that look like? You know, I guess the advice that I would give other photographers is be absolutely crystal clear on what you want,

00:03:52 not only out of your business, but kind of out of life. And I was at that crossroads, you know, since I had two young children that I was looking for freedom to be able to schedule my life around, you know, their needs and working in the corporate world, you know, there were days that I wouldn't get, you know,

00:04:08 they'd be in daycare all day and we wouldn't get home until six 30 at night. We'd have about an hour before bedtime. And I just, you know, we were kind of getting close to going to elementary school for them and I wanted to be able to pick them up at the bus stop. So I think it just being crystal clear about what you want your life and your business to look like is the first step,

00:04:28 as far as any kind of venture into, into a full-time photography work. But yeah, there were definitely a lot of fears that, you know, what, if this doesn't succeed, what if it takes a lot longer to build up this business? And that's why I was so grateful that I did build it up as a side hustle for those three years when I did,

00:04:50 because I already had a little bit of a following and he kind of was a little bit a, of a security blanket almost to have, you know, a business built up to a certain point. You know, I definitely had financial goals. So if you guys know me, I'm very much a numbers nerd. I think it comes from the engineering background and yes,

00:05:14 I know. So I definitely had financial goals associated with it. And the, and that's just to kind of ease that financial strain when you're going from a steady paycheck into, in working. Right, right. Yeah. You know, a lot of people like to say that, Oh, you know, especially people that aren't entrepreneurs that, you know,

00:05:36 that have our best interest at heart, like parents that have worked, you know, graduated college, got a job, worked at that job. 40 years, retired with a pension that they like to say that, Oh, you know, leaving that engineering engineering, your engineering job is so secure. It's so safe. It's the, you know, the right thing to do.

00:05:53 And I almost look at it is I think for myself, it's actually more secure because I have control. I mean, there are certain industries that are more safe from layoffs and things like that than others. But you know, my husband works in the pharmaceutical injury industry and you know, so it's like that industry is just known for, Oh, merger,

00:06:16 you know, he's in the more customer service side of things and the regulatory side. So it's not the sales side, but Oh my gosh. I mean, I feel like that is just terrifying because you have this, you know, nice, comfortable salary and a mortgage and all of those things, and it's completely out of your control, even if you're a great employee where,

00:06:38 when you're an entrepreneur, it's like, Oh, it's a different mindset shift because you start to realize, okay, even if something happened to my business now, like I still have this ability to make money on my own to start to make money on demand, to, to have more control of what I'm doing. And you know, it definitely takes a certain person that's willing to do the work once because it's not easy.

00:07:01 It's not easy. And I don't know if you found this, I know I have that going down, this business owner path is so much self-discovery and so much just learning of all the ways that we, you know, try to stand in our own way, just out of random fear of what could happen, what might be this and that. So yeah.

00:07:24 You kind of found the same thing. Absolutely. And you know, I just have that analytical brain. I can't help it. But being an entrepreneur really forces you to yeah. Look inward and look for ways that you can grow personally. So I am slowly embracing the womb more and more every day, which is something that, you know, five years ago I would have just rolled my eyes and thought that's ridiculous.

00:07:53 Right, right. Yeah. I think, gosh, me, you Heather, who's also one Of our coaches and elevate and you guys know her well from the podcast. She was a, an engineer to chemical engineer. So yeah, we're all very, very literary linearly, left brain. But yeah, you start to go down this and realize how powerful the thoughts we say to ourselves are and where we focus our attention.

00:08:16 You know, for instance, if you're leaving that job and you're completely focused on the, Oh my God, what if, Oh my God, what if, Oh my God, what if, you know, you're not even giving yourself the chance for the, what could be, because you really just need to be defining that success on your own terms,

00:08:35 which I think a lot of people don't do, you know, it's, have you ever noticed if you ask people, like, what do you want? They often don't know You're right. Yeah. There's a quote. And I might mess it up here, but I just love it. And it speaks to this it's what if I fall? Oh my darling,

00:08:52 but what if you fly? And I just love that because, you know, we can get so fixated on the negative, what ifs and you know, that kind of can push out the, all the positive, you know, what could be. And so I think it's really important to focus on, you know, the possibility is out there as well.

00:09:09 Yeah. Yeah. And I think you can go a little bit, like for instance, I like to, if I was leaving my job, actually, when I did, when I left my full-time zoological job, you know, one of the questions I asked myself as like, okay, what if I do need to get another job? Like what if this photography thing doesn't work out?

00:09:27 What then what are my options? Yeah. That's exactly right. That was the number one question that really made me, you know, take the leap was, yeah, honestly, what is the worst that would happen? And then if you really distill it down, it's if, if this photography thing doesn't succeed, then I'll just go get another job,

00:09:48 right? Yeah. Yeah. So I feel like once you can do that, then you can be like, Oh, all right. I've, I've addressed that elephant in the room. Now I can focus all of my energy on what does the success look like and what do I need to do to get there? And that's why it's so important to clearly define what you want and why you want it,

00:10:08 because that will fuel your, you know, mojo to make sure that it happens. Right. Cause if you're like, Oh gosh, I can't go back to corporate America. Right. You're going to find a way that's for sure. Exactly. I always tell people I'm completely unemployable now. Like there's no way I could be employed whatsoever in any stretch of the imagination,

00:10:31 but yeah. The defining the success is so important and I, yeah, like people, I don't think they, they really sit down and do that. And you know, I think that's so much more than just a revenue goal. Cause people like to focus on, Oh, a revenue goal and you and I are numbers people. We have revenue goals,

00:10:47 we love revenue goals, but success is so much more than that. And you know, it's that freedom it's how much do you want to work? It's what do you want to shoot? What do you want to create? How much vacation do you want to take? You know, all of those different things go into creating what that business could look like.

00:11:05 Yeah, you're exactly right. Because honestly, money isn't everything. And my husband, I had a lot of serious conversations as I was kind of leading up to potentially leaving my corporate job and looking at the finances and you know, what, what could we do without, you know, what was, you know, where were our goals financially and lifestyle wise.

00:11:25 And yeah, I think it's really important to have that open communication. If you have other family members who, you know, are kind of in that mix with you, but absolutely money's not everything and you can't get back time with loved ones. So the flexibility for us to spend more time together has been fantastic. But I won't lie though. I think I work more hours now than I did at the corporate job.

00:11:50 So don't miss hear me. The is, is that on Monday morning when I wake up, I'm not just like, Oh, it's just snoozing 5 million times and just dreading getting out of bed and driving to the office. It's now I wake up and I'm like, okay. Kids off to school. And now it's to, to get to work. Right.

00:12:09 So excited. Yeah. Monday's my favorite day of the week for sure. I'm the same way. It's I think one of the hardest things for me, especially moving from a job where, you know, I, you know, granted, I would check email periodically on the weekend or, you know, some of it like that would come home, but really not much,

00:12:28 most of my job was left at work. And so it would be the weekend and I'd be like, Oh, I don't have to think about it. And it was very compartmentalized. But now as an entrepreneur, I mean, my office is right here and I must admit almost every Saturday morning, like the kids are just lounging around. My husband might still be in bed or he's like,

00:12:47 took a run. I'm like, Oh, I'm gonna sneak into my office here for a little bit and get a little work done. Cause it's Saturday morning. Whoo. It's really hard to compartmentalize it. And actually, I don't know if you had these, these daydreams when you first started, but I remember when I was first, like in the trenches of building my photography business,

00:13:09 when you're like, Oh my gosh, I've got to make this website. I've got to do this. I've got to get my pricing. I've got to do my workflow. I've Oh, you're learning. And you're building and you're

testing all these things. I actually was kind of jealous of somebody working at like Starbucks. Like man, they just go to work and then I just come home and then they're done even though,

00:13:30 you know, that's not really what I wanted, but at the time it was just so much work and it was so hard to create that distinction. And you know, it was one reason why it's just so important to be able to turn things off. And I think that's one reason why I like to travel. I mean, I love to travel,

00:13:48 but when I leave my house, I can actually turn, Yes, I'm the same way. I have a really hard time turning my business brain off. And honestly, even when I'm on vacation, I kind of think of like things that I can brainstorm while I'm away. So while I'm not sitting at my computer, you know, or talking to clients or having any kind of meetings or sessions,

00:14:08 I still have something going on in the back of my head about, Oh, you know, what's the next little marketing idea. I want to try it. It's just working in the background of my brain. I do the same thing. When we go to the beach, I'm always like, I'm going to work on this and this and that week.

00:14:23 They were like, why are you working? I'm like, well, this is the work. This is the fun part of work where I'm brainstorming that I don't have time to brainstorm about this at home. Cause I'm too busy working exactly. Or reading business books to kind of getting caught up on that reading. Yes. Yeah. Gosh, we are such nerds.

00:14:38 Total nerds. Yeah. I won't deny it. One question that I find that is so helpful to ask ourselves when trying to figure out what's most important to us and our values and our business and our life, especially around money. Cause we always think, Oh, okay. I just need this money, this amount of money. And then I can leave my job.

00:14:56 Okay. I just need this amount of money and I'll be successful, whatever it is. But the question we should ask ourselves is what does that amount of money actually give us? Because money is just paper. The money actually gives us absolutely nothing. But what would, whatever that money, monetary goal that you have give you, is it freedom is a security,

00:15:18 you know, just what is that? You could break that down. Absolutely. And if you're working towards any type of goals, like maybe you are working towards a, to pay for a vacation or, you know, some other goal, I find that a super motivating, at least for me to work towards like what that money will give you. Yeah.

00:15:37 You know, it is hard though, because I think I see some people who want to wait until they're completely ready to make a move and it's a double-edged sword, right. Because you can prepare and just keep preparing and working and you know, your progress will probably be pretty slow because honestly, I don't think any of us are ever ready for a big,

00:16:00 you know, life change, whether it's leaving your corporate job or, you know, having kids like what have you, I mean, there's a lot of big things that we're just never ready for until you get into it. But sometimes you just need to push yourself outside of your comfort zone. And that's really where you're going to start hustling and make it happen.

00:16:17 So I don't know, I would kind of encourage photographers to not get too comfortable, leading up to and tell like telling yourself that I'm not quite ready or just, I'm going to wait until, you know, I'm making this much money. Sometimes you just have to make the move and Go for it. Yeah.

Yeah, absolutely. What do you think are the kind of bare minimum things that you need to have in place before you get out there and start making some money in your business?

00:16:42 So I'm a big believer in building a strong foundation for your business before you go out and start marketing. So for me, it's like all the business basics, like making sure you're legal, you're ready to take money. You've got insurance, all that kind of stuff. And then you need just the basic website. You need to have a portfolio. It doesn't have to be huge.

00:17:06 I think way back when I was starting my business, I did like eight portfolio building sessions and that's what I built my website on. So there wasn't a lot of variety in the dogs, but I had, you know, that was the bare minimum for me to get started. So yeah, you just need a basic website. Doesn't have to be fancy with all the bells and whistles,

00:17:25 but you know enough where people can come, know what you do, see your work and be able to contact you. And at that point I feel you are, and you have your pricing Products, right. You know, you, You kinda know what that workflow is going to look like. So when somebody actually does contact you, you know, you know what the process is going to be all the way through until you deliver their products,

00:17:48 whatever products that they may be. And then at that point, I think you're ready to go out and start marketing. Yeah. So to me, that's the bare minimum, some business basics portfolio, basic website, and to have your workflow and pricing defined. Yep. Yeah, absolutely. And you know, when Megan mentioned having your workflow and pricing defined too,

00:18:08 it doesn't have to be like, this is perfect and I never have to change it. And I've struggled for years to get this. Perfect. No, no, no, no. We mean just like a basic idea and then you can continue to revise and you know, you could even start off you guys. I mean, Megan and I both built our business selling products.

00:18:26 I mean, I had a handful of when I first started like digital only a hundred dollar sessions and like, Oh this is there's, there's a better way. And you know, but it's okay when you're starting out to start off with just selling some digital files and prints and you know, make a little bit of money to invest in a couple of products that you can offer and start adding those in slowly.

00:18:50 Like I think so many people get so hung up on thinking that they need to have this full suite of products ready to go on day one. And you know, we can build that. Yeah. It's interesting you say that because I actually started with a lot of products and over the years I've really pared it down. So I think simpler is, is easier for your clients.

00:19:11 One other thing I'll mention, I see a lot of photographers get really hung up on the automation. Now, Nicole, you are the queen of automation. I am not, it is totally possible to build a profitable, profitable business without, you know, all that automation and back end CRM Mark. Yeah. I actually want to make an, the Academy,

00:19:35 a little workflow, update the workflow sections and create like here's a tricked out automation. One here's like bare basic bones where you don't even need any software. Like you can use a Google form and like the, the free section. And actually I used to run my workflow and I actually really enjoyed it. The only challenge I ran into is when I was away from my house Wars,

00:19:59 traveling a bit more, I couldn't access things because it was all physical. But for the longest time, I just had a set of folders on my wall and some Manila folders in it and they would move down. It was like a magazine rack you might see at a doctor's office. So the top was like the leads and then they filled out their contract and everything's ready for the session.

00:20:18 And we shot the session and they ordered and it's like delivered. I would just move it down. Boop, boop, boop. And it was just a folder and I stapled the little checklist, my workflow checklist on the front and I would check and make notes and like put any paperwork in there. I mean, it was so easy. I mean,

00:20:34 you could do that on a Trello board. You can, whatever your brain works with. There's so many easy ways. So yeah. All of you guys out there are struggling. Like I need to get this monster CRM up. And I mean, if you're going to be doing high volume studio and if you want to do that, then yes. Okay.

00:20:52 But to start off, Yes, I have actually signed up and tried three different CRMs and I'm back to my binder system. Yeah. It's just what it is, what works for me. And I think that's really important to kind of know what works best for you and implement that in your own business. Yeah. It's down again to defining success and figuring out what we want and what works best for us and being okay with testing different things and knowing that our business doesn't have to look like other people's businesses.

00:21:25 I mean, that's definitely one of the things that we love about elevate is one where, you know, all six of us run our business very differently and none of it's wrong, it works for everybody. So, you know, however you feel that you want to run your businesses certainly a viable way. Yes, absolutely. Yeah. So, yeah.

00:21:46 So we were talking a little bit about your calculated risks with leaving corporate to become a pet photographer full time. What are some other places Megan, in your business that you've maybe taken some calculated risks? Yeah, Let's get an actually, before we move away from that, I wanted to say one more thing about leaving, leaving a full-time job. You know,

00:22:06 once you define what success looks like for you, and you're clear on what you want and why it's really important to have a plan, I'm a big proponent in setting goals and making action plans. And in order to make that transition into full-time photography, you need to have a plan to, to make that happen. So I just wanted to mention that before we move on.

00:22:27 But yes, I definitely think that in your business, there are times where it is important to take calculated risks. And I wanted to share to, you know, leaving your full-time job is definitely a calculated risk, but I wanted to share two other examples. So maybe you're already in business and you're looking for more leads or more clients. And I wanted to share two examples that I have used in my business where I've taken a calculated risk,

00:22:55 meaning I might be, you know, out some money in the front end, but the goal is to bring in leads and clients going forward. So the first one I wanted to talk about is gift vouchers. So especially when you are brand new in business and you don't have a big email list or you just don't have a big social media following, there are definitely times where you need to drag people in.

00:23:20 And I think gift vouchers are a really smart way to invite people in, to experience a session with you. And number one, if you're new in business, it gives you practice not only on the session, but then the workflow and the sales. So you're getting, you know, kind of that practice of your whole process, but also you are building a clientele base.

00:23:42 And so here's the biggest key to gift. And the way that I like to do it is give someone a gift voucher that includes a complimentary session and a small amount of product credit. So they would be able to get something small, you know, maybe a one digital image or one eight by 10, you know, you can decide what you're comfortable with,

00:24:05 but something that's not gonna put you out of pocket too much. But the number one key to gift vouchers is to choose wisely, who you give them to. And I'm going to give you a couple examples of, of people that I think would be good for that. The first one is give it to somebody whose dog that you really want for your portfolio.

00:24:25 I think we all, as pet photographers have kind of like a bucket list of different breeds or different types of dogs that we want to include. And so if you kind of come across one of those, you know, that might be a good reason because selfishly you want them in your portfolio. But then also, you know, if, if you don't have clients or you're looking at an empty calendar,

00:24:43 why not bring them in and invite them in for a portrait session? The second one is to give the gift voucher to a connection that you want to make. So whether this is a local business owner, or maybe a founder of a rescue group, that's local to you, anytime that you are looking to make a connection, it's really smart to let them see what you provide your clients.

00:25:09 And, you know, you can do that in a couple ways, especially for, for local businesses. You can invite them in for a portrait session and then offer to feature them on your blog. This is just kind of a way to get an in start building that relationship that might lead to a future partnerships down the road, same thing for a rescue group.

00:25:27 If you are looking to do fundraisers in the future, this is a great way to kind of show them what you can fully do and then lead to again, future partnership. So that was the second one. And then the last group people that I think is really smart to give a gift voucher to are those people in our communities who are influencers and sneezers now I'm not talking about Instagram.

00:25:56 I'm definitely, definitely not talking about those. What kind of people I'm talking about, people in your community who are respected, who are well connected and you know, who are excited about talking, you know, about your business and other businesses. So where can you find these types of people? You can find these sneezers or influencers in community organizations like your chamber of commerce,

00:26:21 any type of networking groups, you should be able to find these type of people. A lot of volunteer organizations will have, you know, I'm thinking of organizations or boards that put on galas and fundraise the big fundraising events like that. So these are people in your community who are interested in giving back to the community, but they also have a lot of friends and are very social.

00:26:45 So I think that is a really smart group of people to give these gift vouchers to. I love that. Yeah. So those are just a few examples of, you know, how I've used gift vouchers. And again, this is kind

of either when you are new in business or maybe if you're adding a new genre to your business, like for example,

00:27:06 I've recently opened a studio and I added more studio work and headshots and branding. And so I'm kind of going through this same process right now with that genre of my business. And so, yeah. Perfect. What does it look like when you find these people, the actual reach out offer? How are you, how are you getting in touch with them?

00:27:26 And what's that like? Yes. So I am a big believer in personal connections. I don't think cold calling or cold emailing is the way to go with these gift vouchers because you want to make the other person feel special. So you, you know, sometimes that means putting yourself in their circles, right? So, you know, if that means going to a business and shopping there and kind of talking up the,

00:27:52 the business owner before you invite them in for a session or, you know, just kind of in your daily life, as you go about and meet people and hear, you know, listen and learn more about their dog, you can extend one of these gift vouchers. But yeah, I definitely don't recommend cold calling just because this is really about all a personal connection.

00:28:14 Oh, I had one more idea. So once you, once you've been in business for a little bit longer, you can also use gift vouchers as like a VIP gift voucher to your past best clients. I've done that quite successfully in the past as well. Yeah. I love doing that. And then they could use it. They can give to friends,

00:28:32 you know? Yeah. I love doing that too. One of the other ways that I've used gift vouchers in the past is gifting them to a business to give to some of their VIP clients. And you know, that one generally is a, you know, you're looking for places where your target market shops, you're looking for a business that you maybe have a little bit of a connection with.

00:28:52 So that's something that you could definitely do if you've done a session for the owner, like you mentioned, then, you know, it's a great, co-marketing kind of thing that you can do with them. Yeah. The relationships I think are so important. So many people believe that just getting a website and having some social media is all you're going to need to market your business.

00:29:13 And, you know, there is a rare occasion of someone that is able to do that way. Most of us need to actually get out there in our community, talk to people, meet people and, and just get out from behind the computer, which can be really, really scary. But gosh, it's really worth it. Yeah, it's scary.

00:29:32 But it's also really rewarding too. I don't know. I just, I love meeting people and I am an introvert. I get my energy from being alone and, you know, just kind of recharging that way. But at the same time, I think introverts have the edge when it comes to meeting other people because you listen to what they have to say and you know,

00:29:52 automatically people love talking about themselves. Right. So if somebody wants to listen to all the million stories about their dogs and everything, they're really gonna, Yeah, no, that's a great point. And a lot of people think introvert means shy and, and like recluse that it's really where you get your energy. Yeah. I border of the two I'm on all the,

00:30:15 like the Myers-Briggs I'm like 52% extrovert and like 48% introvert. So it's just like, I can go either way Funny after I've had a lot of client meetings in one day or I've just been out and about

talking, you know, I am on. Right. But when I come home, it's like, nobody Talk to me, go into my room now yourself.

00:30:40 You'll be fine tonight. Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. I've started to get total aside to the point where my kids are starting, staying up later than me. And I'm like, goodnight, I'm going to bed. It's nine 30. Like turn off the lights. It's such an odd place in parenting when you're so used to them being little and going to bed early.

00:30:59 But anyway, no, that is really, really good. Those are some great, some great areas where people can focus to, to get out there and take those calculated risks. Because I think a lot of people, you know, we hear it all the time. Don't work for free, don't work for free, you know, and I think one,

00:31:15 there are times where you certainly don't want to work for free. Like for instance, when someone contacts you and is trying to get you to work for free, and you're not seeing the benefits of that a hundred percent stand your ground, but there are certain situations like this where a little bit of discounted free work, opens the door for so much more in the future.

00:31:35 And if you're a new and a market or your portfolio building, those are types of things too, where you know, you're going to be doing it for not even necessarily free, but for a discount or a lower price point, then you will be working in the future. But it's a calculated risk because there's a return on the backend. Yeah, Exactly.

00:31:56 And kind of like what we were talking about before, when you asked yourself the question, what's the worst that could happen. If you're looking at an empty calendar, really what's the worst that could happen. You're adding more to your portfolio and you are giving yourself an opportunity for sales on the backend and you're meeting people. You know, that's one of the most important things about running a small business in a personal brand business is word of mouth is everything.

00:32:22 So it just, it doesn't hurt to, to be meeting more people. Cause you never know who they know and who might be your next client. Yeah, absolutely. So, yes. I'm glad that you touched on working for free because I have one more example of, of taking calculated risks. I love, and this is the approach that I've used with a local business here in Houston,

00:32:44 and it's a kind of like a pop-up fundraiser. So what I will do is go in and set up for like three hours and we run this about twice a year and it's a fundraiser, so people can sign up ahead of time and they're just quick 10 minute little sessions and they get one digital images. So then I love this fundraiser approach, but it will only be successful.

00:33:11 And listen to me very carefully. You must choose a partner business to host this, that shares your ideal client. If you don't do that, then I would hesitate to say that you're wasting your time, but it will not be as effective on the backend because the way I run these fundraisers, all of the money gets donated to a particular rescue that we choose.

00:33:31 So on the day of the fundraiser, I make zero. I don't even try to sell extra images from that event. The way that I set it up is just very streamlined I'm in and out. I want to like reduce the

amount of time that I spend on the event, but here's the number one goal and my purpose for doing these events because my partner business shares my ideal client.

00:33:53 I am gathering leads for my email list and then I can nurture them and hopefully they will come back and book a regular session with me in the future. So I, I think we've been doing this about twice a year for the last two and a half years, and it's been very successful. So that's what maybe like five fundraisers that I've run there.

00:34:14 And just off the top of my head, I think on future sales that were booked based on people who found me from that particular business and fundraiser event has, is probably close to 25 or \$30,000 that have come back for that. So definitely that's a calculated risk where I'm working for free up front, but then the sales and the sessions will come later.

00:34:36 That's fantastic. And I think that's such an important thing before we do any marketing, any event, gosh, get up in the morning is to ask ourselves, what's our intention here? What are our goals? Because doing an event like this, you can have, Oh my gosh, so many different goals. And of course maybe there are a couple of goals,

00:34:56 but choose that one most important focus is that getting leads for future sales, is that making money that day? Is it raising money for the charity? You know, of course, maybe you can do all of those things, but if you don't have one thing that is your number one goal, when creating that event, you're going to be scattered and it's going to be harder to figure out exactly what to do.

00:35:17 So any question comes up, you can refer back to that number one intention, and then you're going to know exactly how to move forward. Right. And kind of looping back around to the kind of the theme of taking calculated risks. You know, the first time I ran this, I didn't really know what was going to happen. Yeah. And I that's the beauty of owning your own business is there's a lot of,

00:35:37 but then you get to decide what you do going forward. So if you do an event like this and it's a huge flop, then you know, it's time to, let's reassess, let's look at what the data is telling us. And let's either scrap it and don't do it anymore or change it for the future. Or if you, you know,

00:35:54 run an event like this and it's a huge success then think about, okay, well, you know, how can I continue doing this? So that's kind of how I look at business. I am, you know, we've talked about how I'm such a numbers nerd. I also love looking at the data and you know, I encourage everyone to do more of what works and do less of what does it,

00:36:13 or, or change it for the future. Yeah. I love that. I have a couple of questions about this pop-up fundraiser and we can dive into, so how are they, are they signing up ahead of time? Are they as a kind of walk-up traffic? How how's the, that working? So I don't really like walk-up traffic because I don't want to create a line while I'm photographing,

00:36:35 to me. That's a little stressful. And with these just being short sessions, you know, I just, I like to have a little bit more control over the event. So the way I have it set up is they're just 10 minute time slots and yes, everybody is required to sign up ahead of time. Now the logistics on the backend, I just have a hidden page on my website where people go to sign up and,

00:36:55 and to pay their donation. So, so yeah, I'm totally in control. The partner business. Doesn't have to do any of the logistics on the scheduling or the client communication or payment or

anything like that. The only thing the partner business has to do is market the event to their, to their business. Yeah, that's great. So then I agree with that whenever I do any sort of session,

00:37:18 whether it's a micro session like this or a mini session or full session, even if it's charitable fundraising, all the communication, I want to come to me, it's easier for the partner. And then I can make sure that the clients are getting the proper information. So I think that's a non-negotiable in any sort of things like this. Yeah. And then back to my goal of gathering leads,

00:37:41 once it sells out, then I just direct everybody to a waitlist and that's how I'm collecting their email lists or email addresses. That's fantastic. And then what's the donation that you've done currently. We're doing \$50 donation. Yeah. Nice. And then what do the clients get? They get one digital image. Perfect. One. They don't get to choose.

00:38:02 I just pick the best one and email it to them. That's perfect. And then is it a full Reza image, medium Rez low. It is. I think I sized them to five by seven. Yeah. Perfect. Perfect. That's fantastic. That's a really great idea. You know, cause there can be so many places that, that something like this core question,

00:38:21 you know, we'll have to do a separate podcast one day on mini sessions, Megan, cause there's so many different ways. You and I both love these and there's so many different ways you can run them from these micro sessions to like a mini session. That's really not a mini session at all. And also just random PSA, public service announcement. Mini sessions is an internal term for us photographers only please don't market them as many sessions.

00:38:45 You know, just come up with another name, limited edition artists and sessions, whatever, just cause you know, mini sessions I feel like is not a good marketing term devalues what we're doing, but this has been great. Megan, this has been so, so good. Well, before we wrap up, do you have any final words of encouragement for those photographers out there that are,

00:39:05 you know, starting to build their business, they have these dreams of leaving their full-time job and they're just, you know, in the weeds trying to figure out what comes next. I think it's real easy to get in your head. And The best way to get out of your head is to just start taking action. And it's amazing how much progress you can make.

00:39:26 If you start ignoring all the voices that are telling you one thing or another and when you just start getting in motion and taking action. So that's my best bit of advice. That's a great piece of advice. I think that is 100%. The key to moving forward in anything is just doing action. And you know, there's a time for student mode,

00:39:46 but it's really easy to get stuck in that student mode and just feel like, well, I need to learn this first. I need to do this first. I need to learn that. But the best way to learn is by doing, you're going to learn so much faster, get so many more lessons, be able to tweak that business and get that business to where you want it to be so much faster by allowing yourself to just do,

00:40:05 giving yourself the grace to make some mistakes. You're going to make them, I still make them. We all still make them and just learn from those mistakes and then continue to, to move forward. Yeah, Absolutely. And the same thing, you know, I talked about your business being a big experiment. Definitely. I have made a lot of mistakes.

00:40:22        There have been a lot of marketing activities that I've tried that were a complete flop, but I would never would have known if I didn't try it. So again, you know, stuck, stop listening to that voice in your head. That's telling you that was so stupid. Why didn't you write right. You're a total failure. No, you, you learned something and you're moving forward in your business.

00:40:43        So absolutely. I actually heard something the other tape too about imposter syndrome because I think we've all all dealt with that. And actually the, the topic was basically that literally every single person has dealt with that. Not even just once or twice, but like on a regular basis. So for all of you guys out there that are like, Oh, I'm not cut out.

00:41:07        I don't think, can I do this? You know, maybe I'm not a real pet photographer. There's no pet photography police, you know, like it's all in your head. And, And the only people That have never felt that imposter syndrome, Oh my gosh, am I good enough to be doing this? You know, all those voices in their head are the people that haven't pushed themselves to do anything that are sitting the couch,

00:41:33        watching Netflix, making excuses, why they can't do any of those things. So if you're hearing those voices in your head, sometimes that just means you're on the right path. That just means you're out there taking action going after the things that you were put here to do and the things that you want to accomplish in this world and share with the world and you know,

00:41:53        create beautiful artwork for people and their animals well said. I love it. I love it. Megan, thank you so much again for being here with us. Why don't you let everybody know where they can find you online and follow you on the grams and the internet? Yes. All the interwebs. My website is Megan Murray, photography.com. And you can find me both on Facebook and Instagram at Megan Murray photography.

00:42:19        Perfect, Megan, again, thanks so much for being here and if you guys want more, Megan, she's periodically in the Academy is one of our Academy coaches and one of our elevate coaches as well, helping everyone get their spreadsheets and numbers in check. Thanks Nicole. You're welcome. Thanks so much for being here. Megan, talk to you soon and everybody else out there.

00:42:40        Talk to you next week. Have a good one For listening to this episode of hair of the dog podcast. If you enjoyed this show, please take a minute to leave a review. And while you're there, don't forget to subscribe. So you don't miss our upcoming episodes. One last thing. If you are ready to dive into more resources, head over to our website@wwwdtothairofthedogacademy.com.

00:43:06        Thanks for being a part of this pet photography community.