

00:00:00 Welcome to the hair of the dog podcast. Today. I am talking with pet photographer. Marika Moffitt all about her incredible rebrand. We're going deep in this one about fighting your business and life's purpose how to know when it's time to change your business and really embrace that and what to do about branding when you're just starting out. So no matter where you are in your journey,

00:00:25 you're going to want to tune in to this week's episode. So 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 addict, chocolate martini connoisseur, Nicole Begley.

00:00:48 Hey everybody. Welcome back to the hair of the dog podcast. I'm your host, Nicole Begley. And today we have back for her fourth appearance, but it's been quite some time. Miss Marika Moffitt from the artists previously known as dirty dog photography, and now known as soul dog, collective Creative, Creative, creative. Yes. Oh my Gosh, Marco.

00:01:13 Welcome back to the podcast. Thank you. I love it. Yeah, you're going to have to be the artist formerly known as dirty dog photography. That's awesome. I'm a t-shirt made. Yes, exactly. It was some crazy looking like graphic that we don't understand. I love it. I love it. Oh my gosh, mark. I'm so excited to chat with you today because as we just alluded to,

00:01:38 you just went through a pretty big rebrand with your business. So first of all, how long were you dirty dog photography? When did you start your business? And you're based out in the Pacific Northwest Seattle area, actually real quick for those of you guys that are just tuning in, if you haven't heard mark on the podcast before, it's been a hot minute since she was on,

00:01:59 but she was on episode number 8 30, 3 and 40, and there's lots of good stuff there. So go check those out. But anyway, yeah. Tell us a little bit about when you started, why you started and how long you've been in this pet photography crazy world. Sure. So I actually officially started dirty dog photography in 2011, kind of as an offshoot of my people,

00:02:22 photography that I was doing, which is dirty bird photography. And I had, you know, my dogs were and all the animals in my life were the reason why I got into photography as a kid. But for some reason, you know, I kind of went away from that when I would photography school. I didn't really see it as what I could do professionally.

00:02:44 Well, yeah, back at that time though, there was like three pet photographers. So it was not really seen as a viable option. Yeah. Yeah. And I was doing my photography part-time for the longest time because I, so I finished photography school in 2000 and everything in my school was very much about the craft of photography. There was very little business at all being taught and we just didn't have what you've created for pet photographers,

00:03:11 the education to actually run a business and be profitable. We didn't have any of that. So I had to just, you know, I just worked a regular job, several different regular jobs over the years and did my, my passion on the side. And I knew I had a, another photographer friend who was telling me since like 2010 market, you need to focus on dogs.

00:03:33 You know, you love it, you need to do it. So I started dirty down photography so that I could just start playing around with that. And I was living up in Anacortes at the time, which is about an hour and a half north of Seattle

where I live now, which is very small area. So I didn't, you know, I,  
00:03:50 again, just doing it super part-time. And then in 2014, my now husband and I decided we were going to move to Seattle to like, let's go after our dreams. If there's any time, let's do it. Now he's a musician. I wanted to do my dog photography. And so we moved here and it's really expensive. So we had regular jobs.

00:04:13 So when we first moved here, I cleaned houses. I worked for a house cleaning company and D and built and was working on dirty, dark photography on the side. But it's a whole new market. All of these different things and cleaning the houses is a really hard job. So I didn't have a lot of energy to fully put my heart into building my business.

00:04:35 So I just sort of didn't do that. And it made me really unhappy. And then eventually got to a point in 2016 after we got married that I realized, well, we actually went on this 14 day honeymoon road trip through like national parks and state parks in Utah and all of these beautiful things. And I, during that time I realized, what am I doing with my life?

00:04:57 This is what it's all about. Like freedom. How do I, how do I get this all the time? And I was like, the only way to do that for me is to be my own boss. And so, yeah, so six months later I left the w I no longer worked for the company cause I was like, I'm not going to work for anybody else.

00:05:13 And I, my husband and I decided that it was time for me to launch full time and focus on dirty dog photography. And I did actually clean some houses on the side for myself. I opened my own business. Yeah. And just continued to clean houses for a few people just to float through that building time and amps. And I'm so glad that I did that because it was easy at that point,

00:05:37 it was easy work because I had been doing it for several years and, and I knew the houses that I was cleaning. I didn't have to market and try to get more clients. I was good. So I got to really focus on building my brand and I got to actually think about, okay, if, what do I really want this to be what this is going to be?

00:05:56 The thing that I do that gets me to where I want to go, what do I want that to look like? And so I just started doing that and it was amazing. I mean, that was 2017. That is when I, when I went full time. Yeah. Wow. Yeah. I think a lot of people get up in their head of like,

00:06:15 you know, I'm working this full-time job and it has to be an all or nothing like total switch. And I think that can put a big roadblock in the way of, you know, pursuing these dreams and going after, you know, opening your business, but you don't have to do it that way. Like you didn't do it that way. And I didn't either when I left the aviary,

00:06:37 I ended up working part-time for them. And then I also had, once I was not doing part-time for them anymore, I was doing like some part-time photography, like newborn and hospitals thing. So not my jam at all of like what I do, but it was like, oh, it's photography. It's was like, just a couple hours, quick,

00:06:56 decent money. It was like, great. All right. Super. So I think there's a lot of, really out of the box ways that you can create some other income in your life that is still flexible. You know, your role is you're not going to work for anybody else, but your role wasn't, I'm not going to do anything other than photography.

00:07:13 You're like, oh no, I'll still clean some houses, but for me, so I

make all the rules. So yeah. So I think people just need to be open to, you know, how instead of asking or saying like, oh, I can't do this, but just asking, all right, how can I make this happen? What do I need to put into place to make this happen?

00:07:30 Yeah. And I think the other really important reason too, that you don't have to replace an entire income when you're building your, your photography business to give yourself that grace period is that then you're not acting from a space of desperation and taking just about a client that comes through to you. Like that was the other thing for me is I knew that I wanted to build something that was amazing.

00:07:56 And then in alignment with what I, with the type of work I wanted to do, the type of people I wanted to work with, I tried a bunch of different things out. And, and as we go through this and talk about the actual rebrand, like I'm at a point now where I'm not doing any of those things anymore because they don't fit,

00:08:13 but you have to try out those things, but you need to be able to do it in a way that it's not coming from desperation, it's coming from exploration. And so that you can go after the clients or receive the clients that are most in alignment with the life that you want, not just the money you want to make, but the life you want to make,

00:08:31 because I know for me, like there are certain types of people like mean people. I don't want to work with 18 people. I don't. And so I'm not desperate. I'm not coming from a place of desperation where I will take the mean dollars. No, I'm not taking it in dollars. Right. Right. Yeah. No, that is huge.

00:08:48 To be able to determine what it is like, who your actual ideal client is, and to be able, attract that person and have the ability to kind of pick and choose who you're working with. I think a lot of people end up getting in that. I mean, I've been guilty of it now. And again, I'm just like, oh,

00:09:08 all right. Yeah. I can squeeze in another client. Oh, okay. Yeah. And taking clients saying yes to clients that you can tell, aren't always the absolute right fit that usually then ended up not being the right fit. And in the end, you're just like, why did I, why did I do this? I'm not serving anybody and not serving them as well as they could be served,

00:09:27 not serving myself. So getting really clear on that is, yeah. I think the first step of any of that is getting really clear on yourself and being super connected to who you are and what you want in your life. Because there are some people are building businesses where their connection to their clients isn't as important to them because they truly, their joy comes from the actual work that they're doing.

00:09:51 And so if they're working with someone who isn't someone they would want to call their friend, that doesn't matter as much because the way they've structured their business, they're not necessarily having a lot of FaceTime with them. So they don't have to take on any of the, the emotions of that person. That's not the business that I'm, I have built. My mine is very emotional.

00:10:12 So I do have to protect myself, but I think that there's room for, for all of it. It's just, that's why it's so important to understand yourself and what you want and what you have capacity for. And if, if that means you want to have be shooting as much as possible, and you don't, it doesn't matter to you as much that if someone fits completely the type of person,

00:10:35 that's okay, it's more than being really clear on what you want.

Yeah. Yeah. Being really clear on that. And then also being really clear on what you want to create because so many pet photographers, like they're like, what should I offer? You know, what products? And they're so worried about choosing the right products, but, oh my gosh.

00:10:54 I mean, all of our businesses can be so different and how it's structured, how it's priced, the products we offer and all of that needs to come from a place of, of you loving it, because that's going to show what's your connection with your clients. And you're going to attract the people that also love what you love. For instance, you know,

00:11:15 here in Charlotte, Kim Hollis, who's a friend of mine, another local pet photographer. We offer very different products, but we have the same target market. And yet we both have clients. So there's, there's no right or wrong. No, no. I, one of my favorite things in coaching is talking about pricing and building that, not just the numbers,

00:11:37 but the actual experience of what you're offering your clients. Because the way that I personally look at it is yeah. Find it. What do you love? Like what I built all of my pricing around one particular product that I want my clients to get, because I want them to have the experience that it provides, which is the book I want them to have.

00:11:57 This beautiful experience is kind of the overarching theme of what I do in my work is connection. And I want to provide my clients with more opportunities to continue to connect with other people. And with themselves, long after their dogs are gone. And for me, the best way for them to do that is to have a book that they can physically hold in their hands and sit down with other people and share the photos into and tell stories.

00:12:20 That's what I want my clients to do. So I built all of my pricing around the fact that I want my clients to get that book. Right. So it's, it works. It absolutely works. And I never really worry about, oh, am I offering enough? No, my clients trust me. And they, they are like, okay,

00:12:36 well, what should they do? Well, here's what most people do. And the secret is because I, I, I talk about all the time Everybody wants it because I talk about it and I tell them, this is, this is the best way right here. Yep. Yeah. Cause most people have not done this before. They have no idea.

00:12:53 So they're looking to us for our professional input and, you know, and to be able to tell them why that book is so special or why that wall piece is so special, you know, that's, that's the why we're always talking about, I think people get up in their own head of like, oh my God, I have to define my why.

00:13:10 I don't know. I like dogs and photography, but there is more of a why there, like for me, I'm not so much the albums with that signature wall piece, like a big, bold, gorgeous signature wall piece. And I sell one to pretty much every client because that's all I talk about. It's, it's just, that's what we do.

00:13:30 So, because I want to, to decorate their space with something that's meaningful and beautiful that they'll see every day. So yeah, there's no right or wrong guys. Just be clear for yourself, what you love. And that's the thing is when you're clear on that, and you can talk about it with passion and passion comes out in, in many different ways,

00:13:52 there's no right or wrong way to be passionate, but the only way for it to truly come out as if it's authentic to you, if you really truly are connected to what you're sharing with your clients, then they will feel it. And so that's, I guess that's the, the, the challenge for people is just look at yourself

and, and learn about who you are.

00:14:10 Yeah. I'm wondering if there's anyone out there that's like, well, how do I know if it's authentic? I think I like it. Oh yeah. Right. I think we all have that about things is, especially in the beginning, when you're overwhelmed with all of the options for me, it really comes down to personal experience and looking back at my life as a whole.

00:14:33 And what were the things that lit me up as a kid that made me excited. Why did I love the animals in my life? What, what drew me to wanting to take photos of them? And then just sort of taking the time to think about what would it mean to me personally, to have I I'm now in this where I've lost my dog last year and,

00:14:55 and you, you are in the same boat, right? So now what we get we're on the other side of it, where we are actually experiencing what the photos of them bring to us now. And for me, that's also really why my rebrand has happened because I have been thinking about that nonstop. Like here's where my life is. I'm on the other side.

00:15:20 How can I be a better guide for my clients in sharing my experience at this? And, and I've been through this journey many times with the dogs and cats and horses in my life, having loved and lost them. And so that's kind of what I built my business on was the idea that, you know, I could guide my clients through that time,

00:15:39 whether they're at that time or not, because the thing is it's inevitable, it will happen. We will have to say goodbye to them in this earthly life, but their, their stories don't have to end. So here's how we can help them live on through us is through the photos, through the stories, through the conversations that we have with other people about our experiences.

00:16:01 And I think that it does start with us as photographers. The first step is to go there, to go there for ourselves so that we can better serve the people that we're asking to, to stand in front of our, our cameras. Yeah, for sure. And sharing that, that story and not being afraid to, you know, let people know about your experiences.

00:16:21 I think a lot of times people are worried about, oh, I don't want to say anything about, you know, the, the fact is that our time with these animals are short, so they don't want to like, feel like they're jumping on this like slimy marketing thing by like bringing attention to that. Yeah, exactly. Yeah. But it's not,

00:16:43 it's not like that. It doesn't have to be like that. No, it doesn't it. And that's the thing is that's why for it to be truly from the heart, you have to go to the heart and you have to know your, how you feel about it. And it's okay. If, if, if you can't get away from that feeling of it being slimy,

00:17:02 then that's okay. It's just not meant for you to go there right now. And like I said, I am, my brand is completely emotional and vulnerable. And, and like, I go there all the time because that's how I exist in the world. That's like my, my own personal soul journey is to uncover and discover all of the like deep,

00:17:22 emotional things that are possible in this lifetime, because that just makes me, it makes me feel more human and more connected. And that's what, that's what my rebrand is about is I just want to have these beautiful conversations with, with clients. I just had Wednesday, I had a consultation and a sales session that both were so moving and just listening to my clients speak about

their,

00:17:47 their connections with their dogs and their lives. And one of them is, was a consultation and she booked and we're going to have a session. And in may, and the other is her dog passed two and a half weeks ago. And so it was just a very emotional, many tears were shed from both of us talking and it was all over zoom,

00:18:08 but having been able to hold that space is really important to me. And as a, as a person, I can't do that with, you know, 10 clients a month or 10. Yeah. And so I've, that's why I've purposefully built what I built because I want it. That's what I want in my life. I want to have those deep,

00:18:28 beautiful connections with people. I want to be able to give them this space to feel safe and share those things so that they can go out into the world and understand that they can do that's that it's okay. That what they feel about the dogs in their life or the cat or the horse is, is worthy of being shared and seen. So I love it.

00:18:50 I love it. So as this I'm sitting here, like crying myself. Yeah. I know. I figured I would have some tears today. She's so mad anyway. So what, what was your, you know, as you went through, because this has been a journey, a long time coming, figuring out like, this is what I want my business to really involve.

00:19:13 So what was the decision process when you were coming along? And you're like, oh my gosh, I need to totally change my name. Rebrand. This is more than just a changing my positioning and changing my messaging. This is like a full on new whole picture. Yeah. I think what's interesting is thinking back to, like, when I decided on dirty dog photography,

00:19:37 I mean, it was just like an offshoot of dirty bird photography. And, and I know like, it's funny, like I love watching when people are starting their businesses. I love watching them do the, what should my name be game? Because it's, it's hard to know. It really is. There's should I use my actual human person name or should I create a name that is cute or is whatever.

00:20:01 And it's hard to know because you don't know where you're going to be in five years. Right. Or for me, however many years been, yeah, just a few, but it kind of over the past couple of years, I definitely was feeling the push that, okay, I'm going somewhere. This is shifting something different is happening. And then last year was such a dumpster fire within a dumpster fire of a year,

00:20:27 having lost a family member to suicide and a grandmother to cancer. And then my soul dog to old age, she was ready to go. Yeah, it's still Just easier. No, it Doesn't. It's just absolutely devastating. And I say probably in between the point of when my nephew passed and Caroline passed is when I really started personally feeling a lot of different things.

00:20:55 Just my whole entire world was completely shaken up because it's just an experience that you can't prepare for. Right. Right. You can't, you just can't it's and grief does not grief comes for all of us and it comes in different ways. And I took a lot of time off from my business because I had to, I had to for, I had to be there for my family.

00:21:18 And then during that time, Carol wack, my dog was, she couldn't be home alone. She couldn't be left alone because she would get stuck in places. She, you know, she was just at that point and my husband and I knew, we just knew after my nephew passed, we just, we kind of, that was like a, a big reality check for us.

00:21:36 Or like, Caremark's going to go this year. We just already know this year is not going to be great. And so we just prepared ourselves for that. And

I just decided I'm going to give her as much of me as I can. And so I took time off a very limited schedule for client work. And in that time I really got to like discover our con our relationship that we've had for the entire time that Kerouac was in my life.

00:22:04 Cause like I got her as a puppy. So she would have been 16 this past December. So that's my long time. Yeah. I was 22 when she came into my life. So that's like some pretty important years of my life, like discovering who I was as a, as a person. And in the, the last two weeks that we had together was really the huge turning point for me and seeing what was possible in,

00:22:32 in my business for, and what I could do in my community. I shared very publicly what care wack and I were going through. I made a lot of Instagram posts and reels and things, and I just let myself create. Cause my, my greatest form of healing is creation is art is really letting, letting all of that come through in, in different,

00:22:57 interesting ways. And I had a lot of people reach out to me during that time to thank me for sharing so openly because they, as hard as it could be to watch that, that anguish, it was healing for them, whether they had experienced something similar years ago recently, or knew that it was coming up sometime in the, in the near future,

00:23:21 it was just kind of like being a, being, letting people know here's what I'm going through. It's okay. Like we go through this together and, and it just, there's just something that happens collectively when you share your, your emotion, share your grief. And I knew during all of that, that there's something bigger that I could be doing to help people.

00:23:44 And I wasn't right away because it was just right after she was gone. I was like, oh, I'm a mess. I don't know we're done with all of this, Burn it down. Yes. And, but that's when it really started hitting me that, okay. I think next year the rebrand is going to happen. I'm not completely sure exactly what that looks like yet.

00:24:10 And then I also decided that I was like, I'm not gonna just sit around here in Seattle. I'm going to go places. And so I started booking Airbnbs To be like, this is, I'll have to manage my problems too. It's like, okay, fine. I'll just book an airline ticket. Well, and like having had my dogs for the past,

00:24:30 you know, like 15 and a half years that wasn't easy to ever go on trips because, you know, we would always have someone watch the house with the bags because I was like, I'm not going to put them in a yeah. Yeah. I don't know, Go in the kennel. Yeah. And so I felt like, okay, I need to embrace this,

00:24:49 this freedom and this grief and go find my healing. And so I started doing that and I've been to a lot of like, and not, not necessarily big giant trips, just like, you know, a few nights here and there. Right. And so in, well, a couple of different things happened in December. Okay. So here's where I'll tell you about my fun thing that I do.

00:25:10 So a really big part of my creation process and just my, like, here's how I survive. Being a human is this thing that I call inner Googling. And it involves me asking a general question of myself or out to the universe. And then I use my taro cards to help me find the answers. And it's not fortune telling the T the are not telling me the answers.

00:25:36 It's triggering a, an inner knowing that's already here within me. It's inner Googling. I'm just Googling myself. I love it. Goodness. I sent it to my sister not too long ago. And she started crying, laughing. She was like, you were

so weird, but it's so real. Like she doesn't do Oh, but like for journaling too,  
00:25:58 with different journaling prompts, this just like my inner Google,  
Exactly what it is. And I do is a combination of that. And then I journal about  
what comes up. And so in December I was thinking, I was kind of in a space of like,  
okay, I'm ready to start thinking about what's next. And I, one of the questions  
that I ask is what does the world need from me now?

00:26:18 Or what is what's needed from me? And I do this to guide me and  
like a lot of my social media content too, because I really it's important to me to  
have purpose behind what I'm posting. And so sometimes I'll be like, really, like,  
I got really burnt out last year. I, over the last few years I got burnt out on a  
lot of different things.

00:26:36 And so I would find myself not able to post to social media because  
I was like, I just don't have anything to say, which is, can be PR problematic  
because you need to be showing up regularly, but you also need to listen to  
yourself if you're burnt out, let yourself burn for a little bit. Right. And so  
this one morning I woke up and I asked,

00:26:56 I did ask the question, what does the world need from me? And what  
the cards told me was what, and what came up, was that something different,  
something new. They need something different. And immediately, as soon as I went  
there, I knew I like created the soul long journey project, which is a 52 prompts  
for people to their photo or video and story prompts for people to capture their  
soul dog journey,

00:27:26 their journey with their soul dog. And I created it partly as an  
answer to being, to not being able to actually serve as a photographer, everyone in  
my market, because not everyone can, has the budget to work with me, but I still  
want them to be a part of my community. So this was me creating that for them. And  
then also I created it because I,

00:27:47 as a way for other photographers to be able to go there, to be able  
to take the steps, to really deeply connect with their own stories. And I think I,  
I created all of it in, in like two days, the whole entire course, because it was  
just, it was the right timing, right? Yeah. It was just like the divine download.

00:28:06 I get that too. Or it's just like, oh, this is not even coming from  
me anymore. Exactly. Yeah. And that's actually, when I AF that's, when I realized  
that, like, I am absolutely a conduit for, for ideas for the universe and that I  
have to actually, like, I have to be in the right head space to really truly  
receive it and make it happen.

00:28:27 And so I, I created that and that was like the next step toward,  
okay, this is, this feels right. That we're, we're headed in the right direction.  
And then in January, my husband and I went and stayed in a cabin on the river for a  
couple of nights for my birthday. And that's when I was really like, kind of  
thinking so much about,

00:28:45 okay, I want to rebrand. And I want like full rebrand, new name, a  
bunch of new things, all the things. And we actually went for a hike out in the  
forest that lasts was much longer than we were even expecting, but it was totally  
worth it. It was like a Misty foggy day. And there were like multiple waterfalls.

00:29:03 It was amazing. Very sweaty too. So, and it was out there just  
listening to nature that I, I was like, okay, I'm doing it. It's going to be sold  
out creative. And, and my husband was totally with it. He was like, yeah, that  
makes I get it. That makes sense. And then I was like,

00:29:19 and it's going to cost money And let's be clear. It's not going to

be cheap. I Love it. I love it. You know, your value and you know, your worth. And then it's excellent. Yeah. And it's, and it was the kind of thing too, that well, and it was terrifying. That's how I also knew that I needed to do it.

00:29:37 Cause it's terrifying because you could look at my business from, from the outside and, and be like, there's nothing wrong with it. Why are you doing this? Like, like you're P you get a lot of inquiries every week through Google and like people are booking and they're paying your prices, all of these things, what the hell mark? Or why are you doing this?

00:29:55 And I'm like, well, that's exactly why. Cause I'm at a spot that it's like, okay. Yeah, I built what I needed to, but where I'm dirty dog photography no longer fits where I'm going. And, and I need to move into that new space. And also, I sure I get a ton of inquiries. A lot of them are not the right fit.

00:30:16 So there's something out there that's not fitting, not doing the right messaging. And so it was time to move into a new space for that. Yeah. Yeah. Oh my gosh. Did you, when it was time to do that, did you have a designer in mind or did you have like the whole big wide world of designers? No. So when I was in my BNI chapter R the Graphic Designer,

00:30:41 his company, like from the beginning, when I first saw his first eight minute presentation, I was like, oh good, golly. I hope I get to work with them one day, like, adjust. I love everything that they stand for. And so I reached out to him and, and I was like, okay, I'm doing the thing.

00:30:59 It's time. This is I'm five years into going full time. And he had always said, he's like, their milestones are a great time to do something new. And I was like, but it's more than a milestone and all these things. And so we started the process and it's been, we're still in it. It's not finished. It's been great.

00:31:15 I just had a meeting with them yesterday to see a bunch of, of things. And I think it's the final revisions. And then they start working on a few other elements, visual stuff. I know. And then, and I also hired Alex Vitta to do my site Also Come June I'm will officially be a solo dog. Awesome. Do you have,

00:31:42 do you have a, like an actual launch date? So not yet. I will, as soon as I have like my assets, I think, on the public launch date. Yeah. Awesome. And then have you given any thought totally putting you on the spot to how you're going to celebrate the new, the new milestone and announce it to your community?

00:32:02 I am planning, I'm working with my Instagram strategists to sort of do like a fun lead up. I'm kind of wanting to do like the week before, like maybe some giveaway things that get some merch made and do some fun, little giveaways and things like that. I have shirts that say my dog is my soulmate. Yeah. So I want to do that kind of stuff.

00:32:29 It's really been, I've sort of felt like I've been in limbo for the past few months, and it's been really hard to create content because I'm like, am I dirty dog? Or am I sold? So it's been, it's been interesting, but my strategists said, blah, the other issue, like a couple of weeks ago at our meeting, she was like,

00:32:47 Monica, just do it messy. Your community wants to be a part of what you're building. So don't worry about everything being like, perfect. Just do it messy. And it'll be fine. I'm like, okay, I can do that. Yeah. Yeah. Funny small world situation. Rachel, your Instagram strategist was on the podcast last week. I just interviewed her yesterday.

00:33:06 You guys listening to this? Go back to the last episode, if you

have it heard. And yeah, I have a great conversation with Rachel and she was awesome. She's amazing. She, we started working together in January of 2020 and no 2021, January, 2021. And she like with everything that happened last year in my life, it was so amazing to have somebody who could keep me on track with things,

00:33:32 but still be very gentle in, in understanding where I was at with all of the tragedy happening in my, in my family's life, where she was. But, and I tell, I just told her yesterday we had our meeting. I was like, I don't know. I couldn't have done all of this without you. Like, it really helped so much.

00:33:51 Yeah. Yeah. That's fantastic. Oh, I love it. I love it. I love it. I love it. So yeah. Let's talk about real quick too. I just want to talk about the branding. Well, actually your first year, dirty dog brand name. Was that something that you kind of created on your own? Or did you hire a graphic designer?

00:34:10 I did it all myself. I just recently I went back and looked at like all the iterations of Legos that I created and most of them were all like farm-based, but like with some one weird little thing, but the final version that I've used for the past, like I think probably since maybe 2018, maybe 27. I can't remember. Maybe it was before that who knows?

00:34:30 So many years was I actually had shot a silhouette in studio of my dog Cohen and I incorporated that silhouette into the D of dirt. And so it was just dirty dog. And then it said photography underneath. Like it was really not, not professional, but it worked like even Josh who's the owner. So the company I worked with first old dog is chalk box creative.

00:34:55 And the owner Josh, he had he's told me multiple times. He's like, no, it's great. Like he, and I believe him. He wouldn't lie to me. Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's true though. Like when you're starting out, I think a lot of people trying to put their business together and they're like, oh my gosh,

00:35:10 I have to go out and hire this whole big branding team. But you don't even know who you are as an artist yet. You don't know what your business is going to be yet. You, you just, you don't know to. So to like graphic designers are a hundred percent worth every penny and there are some incredible graphic designers out there and I highly recommend working with one.

00:35:30 However, I think it's totally okay at the beginning to jump on creative market, grab yourself a font based logo, pick out some colors, pick out a couple of little brand enhancements, call it a day until you give yourself, you know, at least two years to start to figure out, okay, is my style light and bright? Is it moody?

00:35:51 Is it like true to life? Is, you know, what, what is your style? Who do you like to work with? What kind of artwork do you like to create product wise? What's this experience about what is that? Why? Like, why are you showing up and doing this? And then you can take all of those things to a professional and you actually have some income coming into.

00:36:11 So it's a lot easier to pay the set professional and then they can create something just pure magic. Yeah. I redid my brand. It was 2016, 2016, I think. So I'd been in business for about five years when I, and on a self-made logo, it was actually my signature that we turned into the script part and then just added a stands for a font at the bottom for photography.

00:36:35 But yeah, I mean, it was worth every penny and I still love everything about the brand, which is good. Yeah. I think it's so, I'm so glad that you talked about how this isn't something you have to do right off the bat. So here I'm going to, obviously podcasters cannot say, this is my creative brief that was

created based on interview with that they did with me to,

00:37:02 to create the guidelines for how, what they're creating. And I actually, some of this is stuff that I actually sent after the fact too, cause I was like, Ooh, a bunch of more things came up and here's kind of, and there's no way to really know these things until you have gone there for yourself. So exactly what you're saying is getting some experience under,

00:37:23 under your belt for what kind of work you're creating, who you're creating for. What's the bigger purpose of what you're doing is really important to know because your brand is built around that. And if, and it's okay, if, and also we know this, your brand is not just your logo, it is all of the things. It's the heart and soul of your business.

00:37:45 And so you have to really, you have that has to develop. And so, you know, I'm here and it was the right time for me to do this. And it was scary. It was absolutely scary for me to spend this amount of money. But Right. When I think about all the work that I put in, like for my website,

00:38:03 the, my first few websites, I don't want to do any of that again. I'm happy to pay what, I mean, what it's costing me for the website is what one client could cost, Right? Like, Yeah, Your time is much better served going to get one more client than it is spending the many hours, blood, sweat, and tears.

00:38:23 Many peers are doing the website The six months that it would take me probably cause The amount of procrastination I went, that's what I said. I'm like, I will never design a website or a web page again. It's just not my zone of genius. So, you know, there is a time when we're building our business where you have more time than money.

00:38:44 And so you're going to like, and maybe a little bit of stubbornness because you're like, damn it. I'm going to figure this out. Yeah. I think it's also important to know, to like, to understand how the things work so that when you are actually hiring someone, you can properly communicate to them what you're looking for, but you don't have to do it all yourself if you're in the position to be able to work with somebody.

00:39:12 Yes. I think that a lot of, I know I suffer from this, but I think a lot of creative folks do where wanting to have control over all wanting to create at all, because it's like, oh, I want to be the one who did it. Like I want it to, I want to be in charge of all of it.

00:39:26 Like I want to do it all, but then it's like, but we're doing really. Yeah. Yeah. And do they know more than I do? Like I think I know what I want, but you know, they're the professionals is the same thing. Someone coming to us that appreciates photography and they're like, oh, I love these, but oh,

00:39:42 I didn't even know that we could do that. You know? So gosh, so much of the same thing. Yeah. I'm just thinking back to all the, oh, I don't know. I was going to say, I think it is important though, when you are doing your website, like if you're going to hire somebody else out that you still are,

00:39:59 because I think a lot of people fall into this trap of, I don't want to do this to my business here. Let me throw some money at it. So I don't have to deal with it, but that's the wrong way to approach it. I think you do still need to have a basic grasp of it because you know, I've occasionally worked with some people that,

00:40:18 that hired someone to do something like their website and they don't even know really how to go in and make simple changes. And that puts you in such a stressful place. Then you're like, oh, I need to update something. Now I

need to get in touch. I need to wait for somebody else to have to pay this other person where it really could take you five minutes to log in and make a quick change yourself.

00:40:36 So hire someone to assist, but, but be familiar with the basics. Yeah, that was one of my biggest things in, in hiring someone to do this new website was that it needs to be on the platform that I'm currently using. And so that I can go in and make the changes when needed, because I like to change copy sometimes. Or I like to change out an image or I'm a real big fan of making landing pages for things.

00:41:02 So it's like, I got to try to not do too much of that, but I it's the thing it's like, I need to, if I need to make a change, I need to make good change. I need to be able to do it. So I think that is really important to, to understand the, how things work so that you can know,

00:41:18 oh, I need control over this particular thing. I don't have to create the original, but I want to be able to do the things. Yeah, for sure. For sure. Oh my gosh. This has been such a good conversation and I hope it inspires you guys out there too. If you are in the spot, you're starting to like dial into the why of your business and your bigger goals and bigger picture of why you're doing this.

00:41:42 Awesome. Also for those of you that are just starting your business, realizing that you don't have to be here yet that getting to this point or mark have figured out like, oh my gosh, I need this whole big rebrand takes time. I mean, there's no way you could've gotten here even three years ago. It just, it wasn't, it,

00:42:00 it just needs to happen in sometime. Yeah. I was still trying out all the different things. Try, figuring out. Do I want, is this the kind of thing I want to do in my business? Are these, the clients I want to work with is this the kind of work I want to be creating. It was all of that.

00:42:15 Like you have to, you have to try those things out. And then when you get to the point where you figure out, okay, I don't like this thing, but I love this thing. And you can work with that for a little bit. Then it's time to start thinking, okay, is my messaging is my brand, is my business name is all of that.

00:42:31 Like, is that all of that communicating to the world that this is the stuff that I do. And I think, and I also like for me, moving into my name, being sold on creative instead of photography really is that that's opening the door to more things that I want to be doing that are community-based, but also like moving into doing more video and then just letting the universe guide me and like,

00:42:57 what else can I do with this? So it's, it's I think there are definitely things people can take from this conversation. If they're at the beginning stages that they can take and say, okay, I need to keep that in mind for what to be, what to be discovering along the way as I'm building my business and you can start now, you can start from the beginning,

00:43:18 can start diving deep into, into things. And that may change as time goes on. But just being aware of it as the first step, being aware of the fact that you're gonna grow, you're gonna discover different things. Cause that's the other thing is things will happen in your life that you have to, that will shift your, your path. It'll move you and,

00:43:39 and there's purpose. There can be purpose behind it if you allow it. Yeah, for sure. And that whole finding your purpose. I mean, truly, it's just

continuing to follow the path of what lights you up and, and to figure out if it does let you up or not. I mean, truly, at least for me, it's just like get quiet for a few minutes and you can tell,

00:44:00           you know, when you're like, oh, I'm trying to fit the square peg into a round hole or versus like, I can't freaking believe that this is going on right now because it is so flipping awesome. You know, like there's, there's certainly a different energy in your body that if you just get quiet and just ask yourself, is this the right path?

00:44:22           You know, if there's that little voice back there saying like, not the one, which I guess you have to not get confused with the little voice behind your head of the conscious mind, like, oh, you might mess it up. You probably don't want to do it. Like the one keeping you safe versus the one that inner knowing when that's like,

00:44:37           no, that's not your path. Oh my gosh. Oh my goodness. All right. Well, mark out. Where can, well, what is, are you still dirty dog Instagram right now? Or are you, did you move over? Moved over to Seoul, dog creative. Okay. And I'm still dirty.photography.com. And that will still be live,

00:44:59           but re directing Quiet. But this is why I hired someone to do the things. Cause I don't, cause there's a lot, there's a lot of stuff that has to be like I basically said, when I, when I first reached out, I was like, okay, I want, I am doing this thing and rebranding, but I don't want to lose my SEO jokes.

00:45:16           Like I don't hate all of the hard work that I've done over the past five years. I don't want to lose that so help please. Right. Right, right. Yeah. So if you go to dirty dock photography.com, it will direct you in, in June. It will go to Seoul, dog, creative.com. Nice, nice. Yeah. Alex is a genius for that stuff.

00:45:34           If you guys haven't heard Alex, we actually had on the podcast he's websites and SEO and he is fantastic. And he was episode number 100 and oh Nope. Nope. That's different. Alex. That's Alex Kerns from Australia. She's one 10. That's a great conversation too. But Alex Vita, SEO mistakes, most photographers make is episode number 59. So go check them out.

00:46:00           Oh, Mareka always, I love chatting with you. I can chat with you all day long about all of the things. Thanks for taking the time to share your experience with us and inspire others along their, their purpose journey. Thank you for having me. Of course, of course. We'll see you guys next week. Thanks for listening to the hair of the dog podcast.

00:46:22           This was episode number 143. If you want to check out the show notes for access to any of the resources that we mentioned, simply go to [www.hairofthedogacademy.com/](http://www.hairofthedogacademy.com/) 14, 3. Thank you 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.

00:46:46           So you don't miss our upcoming episodes on last thing, if you are ready to dive into more resources, head over to our [website@wwwdothairofthedogacademy.com](mailto:website@wwwdothairofthedogacademy.com). Thanks for being a part of this pet photography community.