

Hey everyone, this is Heather Lahtinen. Welcome to the Hair of the Dog podcast. Today we are diving back into the coaching journals, and this is our fourth in a series. You can listen to episodes one hundred and ninety two, one hundred and ninety six and 201 if you would like to get caught up. It's not imperative, but it could give you a general idea as to what our clients are working towards.

The coaching journals are two Elevate members that have agreed to share their experiences and let us follow along with everything they are working on in their business. This includes their thoughts, ideas, plans, strategies along with challenges and obstacles. They share specifics on number of clients, how they're getting those clients, sales goals, and their actual numbers in terms of what they are bringing into their business.

They get a business coaching call with me every month to talk through what's happening in their business. And the goal of the coaching journals was not only to help these two photographers, but to share with everyone what it takes to build a successful pet photography business. And once again, those two photographers are Christie Baker. You can visit her@christiebakerphotography.com, and Monica Adelson from Pup and me photo.com.

If you are seeking assistance in developing your business, please consider exploring our Elevate program. I am extremely enthusiastic about guiding you through any hurdles you may encounter, and of course, supporting you in creating a successful and flourishing pet photography business. And what makes us different from any other photography business program is that like everyone else, we provide you with the checklists and the strategies,

but we also know how to support you when none of it works. Essentially, when the standard approaches fall short, we step in with tailored guidance and support. To address your specific challenges, you can check out Elevate at [hair.of.the.dog.academy.com/elevate](http://hair.of.the.dog.academy.com/elevate). Now onto our coaching journals. Welcome to the Hair of the Dog podcast. If you are a pet photographer,

ready to make more money, make 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. Hey Monica, what's happening out there? Things are moving very quickly, seem to be experiencing a lot of success, a lot of action. Give us an update.

Yes, Yes. So a little update. So like June, I didn't hit my big revenue goal, but it was still like huge. So we made over \$10,000 in revenue last month, I know in June. Amazing. And although like I had that feeling of like, I didn't hit my goal, right? I didn't hit that goal that I set for myself.

So you know what I did? I used the gap in the gain process and I looked at my revenue from a year ago and I was like, oh my gosh, my revenue's like way higher. Like it's so much fun to look back. So I wrote down every revenue month, like wrote it out so I can compare it to my, my previous self.

So that made me feel better. What was it last year? Do you remember? Oh, I have it

right in front of me because that's the kind of person I am. So last year it was \$4,836. Oh, well then this year, Okay, yeah, this year is \$10,662. Well, here we go then. That's definitely a gain when you compare yourself to where you were and where you are now.

That is a massive gain. I mean, it's more than double. Yes, exactly. But one thing I should note is that, so for August of last year, I only made \$962, which whatever. That's fine. But this year, August, I only have two sessions booked. So it's like making me feel really anxious, you know, like seeing that,

I'm like, no, we're not gonna do that again. But I'm like anxious about it and I'm like, okay, what do I, how do I remedy this? How do I calm myself down? Like, Well, can you tell me what the thought is that's driving the anxious feeling? Ooh. The thought is that I don't, I'm not,

I don't think I'm gonna hit my goals and I'm worried that like I'm not gonna fill my book. So what is, what is driving that thought? Ooh. That no one is interested Hmm. In booking in August because it's hot. But that's a terrible thought. Right? And, and the thing that's important to note here is it just doesn't serve you even if it's true.

Yeah, yeah. Like Yeah, I'm sure it's going to be hot. It's like anywhere in the southern states I'm thinking. We have a lot of friends in Florida and Texas. Yeah. And it's very difficult to have a photo session outdoors it. Well, unless you do your sunrise, you know? Yeah. Which is usually pretty decent, but okay.

Even if it's true, we don't have to think it. Right? Yeah. Not gonna let that thought come in. No, it's not gonna Cover my day. Because It it leaves you feeling anxious. Yeah, right. It doesn't feel good. Yeah. And I'm also wondering, is there a component that like when you're looking at August of last year,

you're thinking, well, there's proof August of last, right? Yeah. I hate that. I was like, don't let yourself go there. But yeah, like August of last year was like so bad, bad. And this August is like not looking like as good as June and July, and I'm like, there it is. But yeah, we're not gonna,

we're not gonna let that happen. Well, if you, I mean, if you're thinking like, oh, it's, it's always like, this is, I have past evidence, history proves that August is slow. This is a thing, this is how it's going to be. You have to work really hard to overcome that belief. And the first thing you can ask yourself is,

does past evidence always dictate future results? No. Clearly it doesn't. Of course not. Because guess what? You could just as easily, so you're comparing this August to last August, you could just as easily compare this August to July the month prior. Yes, exactly. So, So why, why not look at that and say, I actually have immediate proof and evidence that this is working.

Yes. Yeah. That's what I need to do. So Choose your proof. Yes. You know? Yeah. I always say like, people love, people love to look at past, at their past as evidence of what's going to happen, to which I say that does not predict future

results. And if you are going to look at your past,

make sure it serves you right. Yeah. I think that's right. If you look at July and you think, oh, or June, and you're like, oh my gosh, I'm killing it. This is amazing. Yeah. That type of evidence supports you. Yeah, totally. The other does not. Yeah. I think, yeah, I think I lit,

I went a little ham and like wrote down everything and I, yeah. Probably wasn't like the best move. You know how it is. Like you get into a zone, you're like, I'm just gonna write down everything, not just the one. Yeah, Yeah. No, that's fine. It's all, everything that comes up is all worth examining.

Yeah, that's so true. Yeah. Okay. So how does that feel for you? Like, do you feel like you've moved from an unintentional model to an intentional model? Or do we need to dig a little more? I think, I think I need to dig a little bit more because I feel like I'm still, like, I know that like,

so, like it's been hot. Like I've been booking people like crazy for June in July. So like, I think I'm just feeling a little stuck, like why a, another thought I've been having too is like, I feel like people maybe need a special or some incentive to book me in the months that are not as, what's the right word?

The months that are not like as exciting like fall sessions. Like everyone wants as favorable fall session. Yeah. Favorable. Yes. So like, that's been my mindset too. And I'm like, I don't wanna discount every single session just to get, just to get people in the door, you know? But yeah. So what would you say are the desirable months for,

for Arizona? I'd say it's probably October, November, and then like the spring, because we have some blooms and like people go crazy for the springtime, but I've been like, June, July I've been busy, so, and those are not months. Yeah. You're not class. I also ran specials, right? Oh, you did? Or didn't?

I did. So I ran the calendar contest and then the art gallery. I was that, that helped filled our books. And then I also ran a special where people who weren't, didn't win the calendar, contesters win the gallery spot, they got a discount. So that's how I filled my books that way is like offering them a special deal. So I'm like,

do I wanna offer more deals? Like, it's not a huge deal, but it's just like, do know, you know what I mean? Like I, I'm thinking about it just 'cause like, I don't wanna to come out of a place of desperation though, if that makes sense. You know what I mean? Like I don't want, yeah.

I don't want to like, feel like a scarcity, like buy now, buy now. Like, I don't want that feeling. But also I feel like maybe I should offer some special, like only like three or four sessions at this price or something like that. Just, well, What's interesting just now is your choice of words. So what you were alluding to was you wanna love your reasons for offering the discount.

I have no problems with specials, discounts, none of it. As long as you love your reasons and they're coming from a place of abundance and excitement, and this is what I want to do. Which is what you were, right. That's exactly what you said. But then in the next breath you said, I should offer these. Right? That's not good.

Yeah. Well it just sounds like obligation should, sounds like, like Yeah, yeah, Yeah. It sounds like an obligation. You were so right. Yeah. I, Yeah. Didn't say I want to, you said I should. Yeah, I should. Gross. I don't like that feeling. No, because it, that to me sounds like,

oh, I have to do this. Yes. Versus I want to in Order to Yeah. Yeah. And I want to do it. Hmm. I need to sit on that. I mean, the question is, seriously, do you want to continue to offer specials? You know, they work. Yeah. They get you clients, they can work.

You had a \$10,000 revenue month, so, you know. Yeah. There's not a problem. Is there a problem? Right. There's not, I'm, I'm not missing out on money. I'm already at like 10 grand for this month too. So like, it's working, so why not? Yeah. Yeah's, no, answer the question. It's working.

So why not do it? Question. Yeah. Why, why not? Yeah. There is no reason to not do it because like, it's not hurting me. It's not devaluing, like the clients I'm bringing in are valuable. Like they're purchasing the highest package. They're my ideal clients. Like, it's not like it's drawing and people I don't want.

Okay, so this is interesting. It's working. You're making money. Yeah. There's nothing wrong. So where was the problem? Why? I dunno. I think I just, like, I, I feel like I'm doing the same thing every, the last few months. And I don't wanna come off like, like I'm always running specials, but also only certain people get those emails.

So I have to remember, not the entire mass of followers get those emails. But What's wrong with always running specials? There isn't, I don't think there is. I don't think that people will get like, tired of it. Right. Or I wonder if that's what your brain was conjuring up. I think my brain was envisioning what people like, maybe other photographers are like seeing like,

oh, she's always wearing it special. Like, you know what I mean? And that's because they paid that close attention to you. Right? Everyone's watching me. Nobody caress, nobody. Nobody notices Nobody. Nobody even notices. They don't even get my emails. Like, how would they know? But yeah, How would they know? Yeah. Okay.

I'm like creating this weird audience in my, my brain of like people who are judging me and they just don't matter. So It's what we do. It's like we try to question and examine every angle, especially the negative ones, to try to like, make sense of what we're doing or come up with the best approach or what are the pros and cons?

What is the, you know, like what would be the problem here, the possibilities if I do it this way, if I don't do it this way. And that's not horrible in of itself. I

mean, it's, it's a worthwhile exercise to examine the bigger picture, but it is also important to ask yourself, this is what I do. I'm not kidding.

I'm like, how do, are you creating a problem where there is not one? My gosh. Yeah. I hundred percent do that All the time. I do it all the time. There's nothing wrong here. Now again, yeah. Don't confuse this with like, we need to periodically examine our marketing approach. Yeah, of Course. Yeah. But what I,

what it sounds to me like you've been doing with these pess and different things is you're like testing and you're, and there's some variety and nuance to it and who gets it and what it looks like. And that's just what a scientist would do. A C E O would experiment. Yeah. Oh, I like that mindset. I'm experimenting. I'm a C E O and my job is to experiment.

I'm trying new things, but you know, I have this thing in my head where I'm like, I'm the C E O, I should be a scientist. I should be experimenting as long as I'm protecting the profit. Yes. So I'm not doing anything that's wildly risky. Right, because You're still, you still brought in 10 K almost 11. Yeah.

Yeah. So as long as you are experimenting and protecting the profit, let's go. Yeah. There's No problem. Yeah, you're right. I'm writing. It's your brain, your brain. It's not your fault. It's, Yeah, it's just, It's really not, it's Not being very nice. So It offers up all kinds of scenarios. And I posted this in Elevate recently,

I think you may have seen it. I said, how about you stop listening to your brain and you start talking to it? Yeah. There Is a constant narrative that is playing beneath the surface that we're listening to and completely unaware of. Yeah. And if you just start paying attention, even a little bit, like a couple times a day, you're like,

what am I thinking right now? Oh, my brain's offering me this. And then you talk to your brain, you're like, no, no, no, no, no. I've got this. I'm figuring it out. Your opinion is noted. Thank you. Yeah. Sit down and shut up. I told my brain last week several times to sit down and shut up.

So funny. I love it. Okay. So what are your thoughts now on the specials? I feel like I would like to do them, and it's not something that I should be doing, but it's something that I would like to do. And I'm gonna experiment with some new ideas. So it's not gonna be the exact same, but, And,

and August is gonna be phenomenal. Oh yes. That's the most important part. August is gonna be good. Yes. Running that day. Like if You just decide ahead of time, everything is working and because think about it, Monica, what's the difference between July 31st and August 1st? There's like nothing. Nothing. What's the difference between, you know, the end of August and the beginning of September?

I always talk about this like at the end of the year. Like it's not magical December to January, December 31st to January 1st. It's like nothing magical happens. It's just this like in our minds, this construct of like, oh, this is, and

it can be good. Like, oh, I'm gonna reset, I'm gonna start over. But if it's hindering you and you're thinking July is phenomenal and August is going to be terrible.

Yeah. What's the, What's the difference between July 31st and August 1st? There's none. Nothing. Yeah, I like that. Nothing. There are 31 days in July, right? I have that. Yeah. Okay. I Think so. Yeah. I always forget I have to sing the song and Sing the song. Right, right. Yeah. But the point is,

there's like nothing magical happens when the calendar changes. Right. Except what you tell your brain. Because think about it this way, if it was like September 30th into October 1st, your mind would be going, oh, we're going into a great month. This is a highly desirable month. Everybody's gonna love it. This is great. I mean, why are photographers so busy in the fall?

Right? Is it because they think No, they know. They think they know that they're going to be busy. No, that's a busy time. Okay. Yeah. They count on it. Correct. Because you say it is. Yeah. But then those same people will say, oh, I can't shoot in the the winter like our winters, which I equvalate to your summers.

Yep. Yep. When I heard Jess say that, like when I think it was Jess that like switched, she did that mindset. I was like, I can, I can do that. I'm gonna do that. It was A huge shift for her because she lives very close to me. And our winters can be kind of rough. And she would always say,

nothing happens in the first quarter. January through March is just dead. It's just what it is. It's Pittsburgh, it's great, it's dreary, it's snowy, it's cold. Excuse. It's awful. And then one year she decided to just change her thought, okay, Jess did not change the weather. She changed your thoughts about the weather. She just decided it doesn't matter.

Yeah. Get excited about it. And it didn't. And she had her best quarter ever. And she has, that was maybe two years ago. And she has ever since killed it in the first quarter just because she decided. So if you decide that August is a bad month, so be it. Yeah. It's, yeah, that's exactly. But if August is your best month,

Yeah. Then you can figure anything out. Exactly. Okay. What other thoughts are coming up? Oh boy, what other thoughts? I wrote down some notes here, blah, blah, blah. Trying to think, oh, I don't know if they're like really thoughts, but like things like, I wanna work on like, so I launched my not launch,

I did my re-enrollment or enrollment for my club in June. Right. And I started looking and I was like, okay, so my next enrollment would be in December and I don't think I wanna do December because it's like in the middle of like everything, right? Like the holidays, like people are missing those emails. I think the last time I did enrollment in December,

I think I got like two or three people signed up, which wasn't, you know, you know how I am with my goals. I, I expect everyone to sign up. Yeah. Yeah. So I'm

wondering if I should do another signup at the end of August to try to capture those people that had a session with me last year and maybe you're wanting a fall session and can get on a payment plan type thing.

And could you Do both? Oh, I could do both. I could do August and December. That's an idea. And then capture all those people that had, the new people had a session with us in fall. Why are you so smart? No, no. That was just an idea. I'll tell you the experience. Listen to what had listened to this.

So I always said, I said the exact same thing. Nothing happens in December. I'm really busy in December. I love the holidays. There's a lot of parties and faking and just so much fun. And so I assumed everyone else was busy in December too. It's the holidays. And I think that's probably a fair assumption. People are busy. It's Christmas,

it's the end of the year. Okay. And then one year I decided to challenge that thinking, and it was 2019, December of 2019, I launched Elevate for the first time in December. In my mind going into it, I had my old negative thoughts, which are, oh my gosh, this is a mistake. Everybody's too busy. This is,

I should be doing, I should have done it sooner or later or whatever, right? Oh, it was so up in my head. And then I was like working on my thoughts and I, I wanted to do it. So I just went for it because I thought, what's the worst that could happen? Okay, let's say it's not as good as I could do it again in January or February.

Like yeah, it's not the end of the world. And it was my, one of my biggest launch, well it was the first one, so it was the biggest at the time. Yeah, it's huge. And that December, I'm, and I, by the way, I launched it and people paid for it to start in January. So it was ahead of time.

And at that point, that was the most money I'd ever made in one month, is that elevate launch in December. That's amazing. And it blew December blew all of my thoughts out the window. Like it just wasn't true. And I'm, I'm wondering now that I look back, if I didn't do that sort of on purpose to just like test my own theory.

I love doing stuff like that. Like proving, proving myself right or wrong, I dunno, silly things, but I, I then said, okay, that's just a thought. Yeah. December's not good because people are busy is a thought. It might be's a thought. True, But you don't have to believe It. Yeah. But is it a thought that,

like, I feel like when you think that that you and your offer, is it a priority to them or exciting to them? A hundred percent. You make it, everything becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. So if you think everybody's busy, it comes out in your messaging and your marketing and you, you, you hesitate because you think, and by the way,

hesitation goes in the action line of the model. So think about this, right? The thought is everybody's busy, you're feeling maybe defeated ahead of time by the way. Right? Disappointed ahead of time. And in the action line, things like

procrastination, hesitation, you know, maybe you don't send as many emails because you don't wanna bother people. Right?

I don't wanna like fill up their inbox and invite people. Yeah. I don't wanna contribute to that. And then guess what the result is? Yeah. December's no good, you just proved it. But if you're, you're thinking, oh my gosh, they're gonna love this. This is a great Christmas present. This is such a unique idea. Who wouldn't love this?

This is a great deal. And I, that's what I thought about launching Elevate. I had this new concept and I was like, this is brilliant. It's amazing. It's gonna help so many people. As a result, I was excited. Oh yeah. So what would you need to think to feel excited about December? I honestly, I'm such a holiday person,

I really wanna push it as like a holiday, like the best holiday gift you could give to your family, like photos for the year done. So Exciting. Yeah. And then next year they get their photo album, right. And they can gift it. Yeah. And I'm all excited about this. And if, if at the same time you,

so you're doing June, December, but if you wanna test like August, February, March, whatever, that would be like if you wanna test rolling into different months, like why not do both, Right? Yeah. Just do it. Just do it. And then guess what, you'll have so much data you'll be able to see like, okay,

June, December performed better or worse or about the same as the, you know, like you'll be able to look at it, but you have to go into both of those or those launches at different times with clean thinking because you could distort the data if you've got crappy thoughts. Yeah, that's so true. So good. Okay, let's wrap up Last minute questions,

thoughts, challenges. I'm trying to think. Why am I selling? I have like all these notes here. I'm like looking down, I'm like what else can I work on? I need to visit more businesses. I know that's for sure. We're gonna go do that today. So I'm trying to think of what else I can think of. Did you have Yeah,

you did. You saw that post in Elevate where I went through how everyone had booked clients in the last several months. There were 48 items on that list. 48 ways people in Elevate had booked clients. And then I categorized them into three different categories in person or like referral, word of mouth type things, ss, e o and social media. And out of the 48, 3 came from social media,

three Only three. And we, I feel like so many of us like worry about social media like, oh, I'm not posting enough, I'm not interacting enough. Yeah. It's better to out there Three from social media, nine from ss e o and the rest. So the overwhelming majority came from in person referrals or word of mouth. Yeah. So where should you spend your time out with the people?

So yes, go meet the businesses, go meet the people, whatever it takes to get out into your community. Yeah. Gonna go do it. Yeah. Today we're gonna go to a rescue that one of our friends is like a medical director at. So we're gonna go hang out



with them for a little bit, get them some adoption cards and try to capture their adopters.

Oh yes, Yes. Yep. I'm all about that lately. People and get more email addresses. That's what I'm right. That's what I need to do. Yes. I've been trying to sign up. So I've been finding more events that are indoors in Phoenix, like market. So I've been trying to like get out, I think I was just like a little late,

like some, like I'll find out about one, I'm like, do you have any more spots? And they're like, no. We're like, dang. So I have to be like more mindful when I'm searching for those events next year because I think I was searching the wrong keywords. Yeah. If, if you are not able to get in, do you still go just to walk around and,

Yeah. Yeah. So like I'll usually go and like I thought about just like bringing my camera with me and just like having it like on my hip. Like always, it doesn't matter if I don't take photos, like just bring my fancy camera with me always. And we're gonna be like, yeah, You know why I would take my camera everywhere and people would know me as the lady with the camera,

the big fan. 'cause I would have like the 70 to 200 up. Yeah. It's noticeable. So smart. And people will talk to you because they're curious, you know, a lot of people like photography, so always, always take your camera, always go to any and all community events. We had this, I live in a very, very small rural township and we had this event a couple of days ago called Safety Day,

which was really bizarre. But anyway, it's Random. It's So random. It was so random. But I was so curious. And I was like, so my daughter and I went, I'm like, let's go to safety day. I don't even, and so I'm explaining to her like from a business perspective, she's in marketing in college. Like,

you know, if you are in your community, so for instance, there was a woman there who had a booth and she does balloon animals and she hosts parties and will come to your house and come to your event and do all of these things. And she had a booth and she had her cards and she had everything set up. And I just,

I was like, this is what I'm talking about. Yeah. You're in the community and you're meeting people. I'm like, I'm gonna hire her for something. She's doing these ballooning, it's so fun. But then if you couldn't get a booth, you could still show up and walk around with your big fancy camera and talk to people. I talk to everybody and I,

you know, people would come up to me and be like, Hey Heather good. And I'm like, oh what? You know, like there's just so many people in the community that I know because I'm always showing up my face. Yes. My feet are on the pavement out in my community. Always Seeing your face. Yeah. Feet on the pavement.

I love that. Like gorilla marketing, like let's just get out in the community and meet people. It works obviously. Yeah. Okay. Keep us updated inside of Elevate and I will talk to you soon. Okay, sounds good. Thank you. Bye. Okay, Christy, give us

an update. What's happening over there? Well, I'm actually in Colorado visiting my parents right now.

So I've kinda taken a little bit of a break. But what I've done recently this month is I've kind of scaled everything back. So my goal is to do two to three clients a month. Kind of really too structured and then end, end of life session one or two if I really am feeling good about it. Just kind of in terms of where my energy level is,

what travel I have kind of coming up through the next few months. So that's kind of where I've scaled that back and then progressing into that. Also knowing that I still wanna hit my revenue goal now I've kind of scaled back to \$5,000 a month. I do have to increase my prices in order to be able to meet that goal. So, and I think there's,

there's definitely some underlying costs in there and I think we talked about that last time a little bit more of like, oh yeah, you like kind of start to add these little things, elevate the brand a little bit more. So I wanna factor that in. So haven't quite finished my pricing, but I do have a, a call scheduled with Jess to like actually go through that.

So like that's basically my deadline. I'm like, you actually have to have this like semi in a place that's repre or presentable to get that done. I've had some really good clients come through a couple just like out of the blue found me online or found, you know, a flyer of mine that's hanging around town. So that's been good. And then just a couple people,

you know, kind of have done the magic email and no response and that's okay. Just kinda have to let this go. I think I've done everything that I can do and I feel confident about that really going forward. So, And you are doing well in terms of your marketing and getting the number of inquiries that are generating the correct number of clients?

Yes. Yeah, I think I could probably go better. Like I would like to have more inquiries on a monthly basis. I'm probably kind of tinkering somewhere between like around five a month. I would prefer that to be closer to 10. And I think for me right now it's kind of like I want that, but I also have to realize like what is coming down the pipeline in terms of like first quarter is gonna be shut off for.

Yeah. But but hold on. I would, I would watch that. That's a dangerous thought. Yeah, because You can always put people on your wait list. Exactly. Yeah. So We never listen. This is like, I'm gonna make this up. This is like the number one rule that I'm making up right now. We never, ever want to purposefully slow inquiries ever.

Yeah. Even in seasons when we cannot accept them. So for in your case, you're going to be taking some time off, but wouldn't you rather have those inquiries maybe on a wait list then? I never do. I wanna slow them down on the front end ever. Yeah, no, that's a good point. Yeah. I can slow it down on the back end.

'cause you can decide, obviously you decide how many you accept and whatever overflow there is. Hallelujah. Let's get on a wait list. Yes, yes. Because what if you could like significantly increase your inquiries in the next, I don't know, three to four months and have enough of a wait list built up that when you come back to work after your maternity leave,

there is a slew of clients just in the pipeline ready to go and it's just a matter of getting them booked in on the calendar. Wouldn't that be lovely? Yes, that would be lovely. Right? Because then it's like, it's like a little bit of what we talked about previously of like coming back to my business and then knowing that it's gonna be in a good place where I'm ready and able to take action,

right? Yes. So yeah, that definitely makes sense. Like getting that structure and the process and the systems in place so that inquiries are coming in and you know that they're being communicated with and shown the proper information so that when I do come back it's, Hey yeah, let's go ahead and get you booked in. I wanna meet your adorable dog and take some photos of Yeah,

Absolutely. And I, I would think that, and we, I, we did talk about this, but like actually getting people scheduled for spring next year, even if they're just penciled in approximate date. Yeah. But what I'd like to see happen is that some of these people submit a retainer Yes. Yeah. Get their session prepaid, like yes the contract is signed.

Like that would be the ideal. Correct. Because I really, I don't even wanna start the wait list until probably mid-December, right. Of when people are like, oh, I really wanna do this and I'm gonna buy the Grif certificate for myself and it's gonna be like, yes, that's awesome. We're gonna get you booked in April or May. Yes.

Correct. Yeah. Yeah, that sounds good. Okay, so let's talk about these, well, before we talk about inquiries, do you have any challenges or obstacles that you are working on? I don't think so. I feel very clearheaded in terms of kind of what I want to continue to accomplish leading up to maternity leave and like, I think some of it,

there are some thoughts like that are farther out that I'm like, well I kind of have to get there when I get there. Hmm. That, yeah, maybe like sometimes creep in and what I do kind of try to tell like, ah, pause. That's not necessarily the priority at the moment. The priority at the moment is, you know,

continuing marketing, making sure that I'm getting out into the community, meeting people, getting them to inquire, wait list, all that good stuff. So that's really kind of where I don't think I really truly have like major, major blocks. Okay. So let's talk about these inquiries. You said you're getting about five-ish a month and your, your goal is to book two to three.

So are you booking that number right now? I'm not. I do have a couple people generally, like two generally fall off. They're, I'll get like an end of life and then I'll get like another person to, I'll send the booking proposal with a

contract and everything and I'll say it expires on this date, follow up with them. Once it gets closer,

generally what I do is I open it one more time for them to be able to go in and book. I send them a communication. Sometimes I even text them just to give them a heads up, Hey, maybe this fell off your radar. Try to get it in. And then once that kind of expires again I kind of send that magic email of like,

I would love to photograph your pet. Like, but if this is not the right time, I completely understand I will be here when and if you're ready to come back and perfect. Just kind of leave that most, I have a feeling, you know, people are traveling for the summer, some people might, you know, be like, oh shoot,

I wanted to do this in September because I wanna do it for the holidays or something like that. So I don't know, I think people's behaviors and people's schedules just kind of just dictate a little bit more of that for them. So just kind of coming back to that. So yeah, that's kind of where I have gotten some follow off and I'm okay with that now.

I think in order to get the percentages of people that I want, maybe I wanna increase my inquiries a little bit more. So Well correct because there's always a conversion rate. Yeah, Exactly. Right. So we're trying to determine what is your average conversion rate. And it's possible that we, we need some more data, but you know, if you get 10 inquiries and you book one,

well we probably need to look at the system or the process or where a disconnect could be. And I, I mean I don't think that there's like a, in this case a general rule for what a good conversion rate is. But I mean I would, what would we want it to be? What if we could pick okay, not, and not a hundred percent of course a hundred percent of the people that inquire about Yeah.

That's not realistic. But realistically, what does your gut tell you about a conversion rate in your business? I think somewhere in the 40%, right? Because I'm gonna get inquiries on end of life where I'm either not gonna be able to accommodate it or the pet's gonna pass away. Right? Like, and that's definitely happened where I'm like, oh cool.

Oh Damn, like that that, and it's like, it's a sucky situation. So to me like 40 to 50 feels like a good Yeah, I would agree. I would agree. Yeah. So in order to get two to three a month, we need, you know, at least six inquiries. Yeah. Or you had actually said, I wrote this down,

you had said you get around five now and you would like to get 10. And I think that that's great. Where do your current inquiries come from? Okay, so some of them are coming. Have you ever heard of the Tilly project so that some of them come through an inquiry from that based on end of life? Some are Google search. I would say that like those probably combine would probably be like in the 20 to 30%.

And then whether it's like a specific marketing campaign that I have, that's probably about 50% of what if that and then like random events or something like

that. Like is other, other, I would say the catchall is like, I don't know what, what's left after that. Maybe 20%. Yeah. If I can do my math. Right, right,

Right. What I'd like to challenge you to do is get really clear on these numbers. Yeah, yeah. No point. Yeah. So I posted an elevate, I talked about this with Monica yesterday too. Out of the 48, 48 comments were on that post about people booking clients and out of the 48, 3 came from social media and nine came from s e o and the rest came from in-person referrals or word of mouth.

Yeah. So when you have that kind of data, it gets really clear. I'm like, where I, yes. And like where I should actually spend my time. Right. Correct. So, you know, that shows me that for the most part, and that came from a variety of different photographers, different genres. So for the most part we're seeing that a large,

large, like 80% of these clients are coming from in-person word of mouth or referrals, large portion. But there is a senior photographer I know that is probably evenly split between word of mouth and Facebook. But when I look at her Facebook, her Facebook is because of word of mouth. Like she shoots a senior that senior share. So it's like a combination of the two.

So social media plays a very small, very, very small role in this. But if you know specifically your clients in your market and you figure out that 75% of your clients come from these events, I don't know, I'm making this up. You're like, oh, I just need to do more events. I need to meet more people at more events.

Yeah. We know that that's like where to spend the time. Correct. Where to dedicate time to like research which one should I go to? Which ones are worthwhile? Right. Doing that. Yeah. Connecting businesses that host them too. Right. Becoming, building relationships there. Correct. And I, and I don't mind experimenting. I'm all about experimenting,

but if I'm gonna throw darts at a dartboard, I don't wanna have blindfold on. No. Yeah. You wanna have general direction, right? Yes, I know which way the wind is blowing. Yes. Be like Right, I need to know in general which way the wind is blowing so I can, I just, it's just gonna be more focused in terms of your efforts.

Yeah, no that's great. So if we wanna increase inquiries and we wanna increase our wait list, then we need to figure out where these people are coming from and then multiply that. Yeah. Okay. Any challenges, anything concerning you coming up? No, I feel like right now my brain is just like action the state of action of like I know what needs to get done.

And so now it's just like getting in and now I have a a, a nice little homework assignment to go back and do a little bit more digging on the data to really think about that. But I do think that will be helpful, especially like as you get, as I think about the new phase of life next year too of like, okay,

if I wanna, like I wanna be super targeted of with my time, where do I spend my time? What's the most brings the most value? Do you get a lot of referrals? Like do current clients refer future clients? I get some. I need one of them. I've had a

lot of people want to go on my referral list and so I ha like honestly haven't gotten to like building out my digital referral card and I wanna do it digitally so that they can just like text it to their friends.

Mm. Yeah. Instead of doing like physical cards. Yes. People are just gonna lose those everywhere. So I know what I want to do. I think that's my August goal along with pricing. So, and just sharing that with people. 'cause I have had some really great, great clients that are like, I would love to take your postcards to our vet or like,

yes. Get Their haircut. Like I have wonderful clients that have been super supportive and just like want to share that with everyone. So that's been really great. So I just like actually need to follow through on that. The best people to market to are the people that you already have because they already know like, and trust you. They've worked with you,

they believe in you. So I'm always asking myself, how can I leverage those relationships? Yes. Yeah. And a referral program is, is one way, I mean, but there's also just like nurturing the relationships. Like periodically texting some of your best clients, you know, and you ask them about their dog or Hey, I was just thinking about you and yeah,

I want you to be like really top of mind for your current clients. Yeah. Because then when they have a friend that has a dog or a puppy or something, they'll, they think of you or end of life, you know, they, I, I just like here here's, here are my thoughts. Like if I'm in your area and my name is Christie and I am a pet photographer,

I want everybody to think of me when they think of photography and pets. Yeah. So I'm gonna do whatever it takes to be top of mind for my current clients, past clients, any clients, all people with dogs. I mean I'm just like, I want them to see your name over and over and over again everywhere. Yeah. That, that builds trust.

Yeah. And then you know, some people need to see your name and your photos eight to 10 times or more before they decide to take action. So it's a lot of planting of marketing seeds just everywhere. Yeah. Yeah. It's that like kind of priming notion of just like, I'm here, how are you? I'm here. Correct. Hey,

I'm here. Hi, I'm here. Yeah, yeah. No it was and it was awesome. I had somebody post a Christmas in July portrait of the Santa sessions that I did last year and I was like, oh that's perfect. And I like thank you. Back to the daycare that I did it with, I was like, maybe that'll be my one client in December because I'm gonna be like huge at that point.

Yeah. But I was like, ah, that's perfect. Like thanks for just posting that that was super organic and like super awesome and just like respond to that quickly. Oh it's so fun to photograph your dog all that fun stuff. I love that. Okay. That makes me wonder then if, when you are working with your current or past clients and you send them a text message that says,

Hey, I'm thinking about you remember our session, it was so fun, you popped into my mind and then you have this like brief little conversation. If you couldn't say something like, hey, when you get a chance like reshare one of your favorite images, I would love to see which one it is. Yeah. And then they share and tag you and you have that.

So one thing I loved, this is so funny, I loved it back in the day, but not, but not so much now is when my brides would, it would be their anniversary and they would share their wedding photos on every single anniversary. Yeah. I would get marketing from every single one of my brides, which was amazing. And the reason I don't love it so much now is because my brides are sharing their photos from 15 years ago.

And while I was a competent photographer 15 years ago, I'm like, that's vintage other work. I I, oh my gosh, please don't tag me. No, it's fine, it's fine. You know, but I didn't, I sort of didn't think that through that they would be sharing these photos forever, every year forever. Oops. Okay. It's Fine.

It's, It's so good. And for years when I still had my wedding blog up, I took it down, they would share po, they would actually share the U R L from the post of their wedding day on their anniversaries. And that was huge. That was, yeah, I mean phenomenal because getting Like back links Correct there. Then I have people going to my site,

which is helping my ss e o. It's keeping top of mind. So you know, and you don't have to be a wedding photographer to do that. Yeah. Just thinking of like, how could I leverage what I already have in front of me? There's so much data, so much material, so many photos, so many people that you already have in in leveraging that.

Well I think it's just smart is what, that's what I think. Oh, for sure. Because yeah, I'd like to kind of circle back to the conversation we had during the coaching call or the strategy call was like, it's not, especially after maternity leave, it's not coming back to ground zero. Like you're not starting at the beginning, you're starting from a different place.

It might feel like, you know, you need to maybe do a little mechanical things, make sure things are running right, but like you're not just starting from scratch and like that's kind of like exactly what you said, leverage what I already have. Like I know these things. And so just kind of getting it in alignment to where I want to see it continue to progress I think will really help.

I love that visual. I just pictured like, you've gotta oil the gears. Like you're know The machine, I was thinking about a car, I'm like, okay, haven't been driven in 15 years, but we're gonna go and we're gonna look at some stuff. You're at a new point. Yeah. Your business won't stop, you'll just be at a new point,

but you'll be further ahead than where you were. And because we're working so closely together, I think this is the perfect opportunity for you to set up systems

and processes and plans. Yeah. So that when you do, you know, open the doors, it's like, it's almost like you didn't miss a beat, you know, it's like you're just right back into it.

Exactly. And yeah, and that's kind of like one of the reasons I wanted to pull back for the second half of this year a little bit, kind of shrink the client base a little bit more and then get like really get that stuff nailed down so that it feels like when I come back it's like it's structured. It feels good because like I think in my mind the structure is gonna help me create the freedom that I want.

And so that will be a huge beneficial piece of that. Overall, what would you say your general feeling is about your business right now? I think like con, like calm and confident, honest. Oh, that's great. Like going, knowing that the actions I'm taking today are like helping to paint the picture for tomorrow and that yes, I don't have a clear visual of like what that is.

It's more of an abstract painting right now. It's not realism, but when it does become realism, I know I'm gonna be able to tweak things the way I want them to be, like to be able to work for me. I think that that's great. The calm confident feeling is coming from the thought that this is working. I know what I'm doing and I'm gonna be able to figure this out.

Yeah. Beautiful. Well done Christie. Okay, great. Thanks. Let me know if you need anything and I'll talk to you soon. Awesome. Thank you Heather. Thanks. Bye-bye. Thanks for listening to the Hair of the Dog podcast. This was episode number 205. If you wanna check out the show notes for access to any of the resources that we mentioned,

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