**Interview**

[00:00:00] **Cathryn:** Yeah, so I think for me, it also came back to the insecurity piece as far as. never asking for anything, but always providing value to try to show that, oh, I'm, I deserve to be here that I'm showing up for myself and others.

**Cody:** Today's guest is Cathryn Lavery the founder of best self co a multi-million dollar company that specializes in selling journals card decks and online courses. Best self creates, meaningful products and tools that help you create positive change in your life. So you can show up better for yourself, your connections and the way.

Catherine originally migrated to the United States as an overworked and unpaid architect. And in this episode, she [00:01:00] shares how she went from quitting her job to starting a company that has in just a few short years, generated over $30 million in sales. She shares everything from the mindset that helped her succeed to how she overcame multiple obstacles from employee embezzlement to leaving a hostile business relationship and coming out.

Okay. Catherine embraces her weirdness in a way that has empowered her to create a uniquely successful business. She was an absolute pleasure to speak with. And if you're at all interested in entrepreneurship, then I think you'll like my conversation with Catherine Labrie.

So I would like to start off by asking about this tweet thread that you posted a few weeks back, where you shared, how you started off as this underpaid architect, you had just moved to New York city and you started hustling by selling posters t-shirts, et cetera. Can you tell me a little bit more about that story?

**Cathryn:** Yeah. So, I'd interned at this architecture firm the summer before. [00:02:00] And then they offered me a job to come back to, uh, because I actually went to university in Scotland. And so, when I, I month before I was supposed to move over, they, they were like, oh, we can't actually pay you what we said, we were going to pay you.

So originally I was supposed to make 40 K a year. They were like, oh, we don't have as much work. Can we pay you 30 K. and then we'll increase it, you know, when we get the work. So I'm like, at this point, I'm already, I already have my visa. I do you have like, it all figured out, so I'm like, this kind of sucks, but I'm just going to go and I'll figure it out.

So I go there and I have two weeks in New York to enjoy before I started the job. And about a week into it, I get this email and it's from this company. And they were like, basically like, can you start in six weeks instead of two weeks? Because you know, we're still like slow on work and.

I called them. And I was basically like, what, because I'm, I'm planning on like getting a salary. Like I don't have a bunch of money in my bank account. I can just chill it. And so [00:03:00] the person who ran it was like, well, you know, I know that you've just graduated. And when you graduate, you may maybe want to travel a little.

And I'm like, I did travel. I traveled from Scotland to here. so that actually was the first time when I, you know, when I realized like, oh, I don't know if I can trust. This job to like, not, let me Down. And so I did, I did end up starting that job, but it wasn't for like, till five weeks later. And so, because I didn't come here planning to not have a job, I started like doing design work on the side and this leave was doing anything I could to make it until I started the job.

And started making my own money and like a side hustle because I had to, and then when I started a job, you know, I was focused on a job. And then about six months into the job, like I'm working so much, I'm barely making it. that's when I was like, oh, let me just start something on the side.

Cause I'd always kind of been into like business when I was younger, but I didn't have any like mentors or anyone in my life that had their own [00:04:00] business. So I didn't actually know you could do that for a living. I thought you had to get like a normal job and. The reason that I kind of did that thread was just to sort of show people, you know, I went to school for architecture and I had the job and, you know, everything that you supposedly want and plan for.

And then I realized that I wasn't happy and it wasn't actually what I thought it was going to be, but rather than just be like, oh, okay, I guess this is what it is. I. I like started something on the side and I'm not one of those people that will just like, oh, I'll quit my job. And like, figure it out and run off into the sunset and we'll see what happens.

I'm always like mitigating the risks. So for me, it was let's start something on the side. Then it was making more money than my job was like, not that much time invested, but I, didn't know, like what if I quit this job? And I ended up being, like a complete, like, Lizzy bum and want to sleep in every day.

Like, I'm just thinking, like, I'm gonna have a personality shift if I quit this [00:05:00] job, like, cause I've never not had a job. And I was waiting for my green card And so I basically use that as an excuse with my job to take some time away, like finish the projects I had on site, but.

Just see, like, oh, if I only worked one day a week to finish these projects and had the rest of the time to work on my business, would I actually be lazy or would I enjoy it? So, like a weekend, I was like, oh, I way prefer this. I can't wait to be done with these projects that I can be done with this job. So that's kind of how it started. And, I knew that that job, that business, that design business, wasn't going to be the thing I did forever, but it would be enough to cover my. Like cost of living until I figured out what the next thing was.

**Cody:** Idea of creating posters and t-shirts. And was it, what did already always start as a motivational thing that you were printing or selling? Where did that idea come from? Did that involve your design background?

**Cathryn:** Yeah. It was like, Pop [00:06:00] culture or architecture it was basically, I was doing that for fun anyway, on the side. And that, that was when I didn't have the job yet. And so I would just post them on Tumblr, I think. And then people were like, oh, you should sell these.

So that, that's what gave me the original idea, because I was already doing it for, you know, just for no specific reason. And then when people wanted to buy it, I was like, oh yeah, this is cool. But I also didn't know what I was doing. So I'm like, but you know, I. Buy a good printer to do it at home, with like really good paper and ink and stuff.

And then, you know, a while later I'm like, oh, I should've just got these offset print. It would've been so much cheaper And faster to do that, but I didn't know what I didn't know at the time. so you know, live and learn.

**Cody:** And so it started really, as you, you just moved from Ireland or Scotland. Right.

**Cathryn:** yeah, I grew up in Ohio. I went to school in England and Scotland and so. Uh, I was home before I moved to New York, but I did go to union skull and

**Cody:** So you do a really good job at not [00:07:00] showing your accent. It comes off a little bit, but is that something like you've just learned to suppress or change?

**Cathryn:** I think it's, when I worked in that architecture firm, I would work with a lot of like everyone was American And I think I would consciously change the way I talked with them. And then. If I'm around people that are from where I'm from or from the UK, my accent will come back, but it's, it started as consciously.

Now it's more subconscious and it only comes out with certain, certain words, unless I'm talking to someone from home. Like if I talked to my, my mom or my dad or anyone like that, my, my team will be like, where you just talking to someone from home because they can tell because my accent will come back on the next time we're on a call.

**Cody:** And so you were forced by almost the circumstances that you were put in, of coming here on a green card and then realizing that the work wasn't, what you thought it was going to be and being the risk mitigator that you are, which it's also, I think it's a [00:08:00] common misconception that all entrepreneurs are risk takers.

I myself have always considered myself a risk mitigator. And it seems like you were in that situation and you were told yourself, okay, I can't rely on this external party. How can I get myself out of that situation? And you perhaps, you didn't know anything about entrepreneurship, but then you saw this as an idea.

And you stuck with it. And so how did you go? And I know it's probably a bit of a summary, but how did you go from where you were back then when you just moved to New York and also what year was it to then going to launching best self on Kickstarter and you had $322,000 in sales at, or it was a hundred percent funded in 28 hours and then 322,000 in sales.

How did you get to that point?

**Cathryn:** so I didn't go straight from the job to best self I. Quit the job and basically use the business that I had going as sort of a cashflow to figure out what the next steps were. And I, before I quit that job, because I'd never taken a [00:09:00] business class before, like literally ever, I decided, oh, I have to read a bunch of books on this because I couldn't afford to go back to school and take a class nor could I afford the time.

I'm like, I just got done with architecture for six and a half years. I can not go back to school for something else. So I just. Got a bunch of business books. Like I told myself, okay, you can only quit your job whenever you read these 22 books are on like finance and marketing and business and things like that, because I didn't feel like I knew enough.

And so I read those, I quit the job. And then I was, I did I entrepreneurship course online and I tried to do software, which I, I built it. And then when it came time to selling it, I realized that's when I knew that I was a product person and like, I actually don't enjoy the sales and marketing piece or at least at the time I didn't, I I've since like uncovered things that made me realize that I can do it.

But at the time I was like, oh, I hate this. and when I had the other business, I'd run a couple of [00:10:00] crowdfunding campaigns for that. Cause someone was like, oh, this is, this would be a great on Kickstarter. And so I just kind of tried it and it. Each time I did it, it got a little better. So by the time Bestself came along, I had been sort of creating this framework for myself to be able to achieve more during the day and like hit goals.

And that came from literally being like, okay, write all these books, but how do I create something that I can just follow every day? So I'm doing all the things. The books tells me that works for me. but not having to recreate the wheel each time. And so that's where the self journal came from. And the reason to go to Kickstarter was because it was really expensive to print.

or to just do like, you know, 10 copies of something just for myself. So I wanted it to exist. And you basically, the economies of scale, you have to print a lot. so I was like, okay, maybe other people want this And so that's why I wanted to go to Kickstarter with it. And then the Kickstarter just took off and I'm like, oh, what if this was the thing that. Was the [00:11:00] business because it started as a passion project, not something that I thought would, would be like a longterm business, which is funny because it was the one thing where I didn't do it for a money thing. I did it because I enjoyed it and it ended up being the thing that took off.

**Cody:** And so this was over a period of, of how many years before you were able to get to that, that Kickstarter phase.

**Cathryn:** So I. Moved to the U S 2011 and then 2013, I quit the job. And then 2015 launched the Kickstarter August, 2015. So I've been in the us like three and a half years, I think when I'd launched that.

**Cody:** And so then you told yourself too, that you needed to read a bunch of these books and then you were able to build up certain mental models of business. And then I'm really curious about the self-confidence piece. I myself was, I, I actually, maybe you don't have the same relation, but we all have imposter syndrome.

It doesn't matter who you are as [00:12:00] an entrepreneur. And I once thought I was stupid and I would never achieve anything. And eventually it got to the point where I realized that. I had achieved certain things and I looked back six months earlier and I was like, wow, this is, this is a vision that I had. And then somehow the universe in my subconscious helped me get to this point.

And so how did you go from being somebody who had nothing to do with entrepreneurship? You move to a foreign country and then all of a sudden now you're leading, what would be described to many as a very successful business? What was that mental process for you? Like the mental evolution.

**Cathryn:** so I think, because it wasn't overnight, it it's knock up on me slowly. And I was very, like, I had a lot of imposter syndrome always coming from an architecture sort of design background. I always felt like, oh, I'm not going to fit in with the. Business world. Cause you know, I haven't been to school for it or I, you know, I'm basically like DIY seeing myself through books and things like that.

So I definitely felt like an imposter syndrome and I thought [00:13:00] the design background was going to hold me back. And what I realized over time was because the insecurity actually made me show up. Not expecting anything or, and also trying to show, oh, like I deserve to be here. So the insecurity and the lack of confidence, maybe show up in a way of like, oh, I'm going to prove to myself on others that I deserve to be here without, any expectation.

I think that actually helped me because I was able to like build a network. And I also would just ask, you know, I wasn't pretending, I knew stuff that I didn't, and that. I think allowed me to ask for help when maybe if I, if I do much competence, I would just assume that I knew everything. and so, because it didn't happen overnight, it was over time.

It's like I'm seeing proof of my work, which is allowing me to build confidence. And that is the only reason that I've been able to build it. But at this, when I first started, I was very insecure and very lacked confidence in basically [00:14:00] everything.

**Cody:** That was a very similar experience for me. And when I was actually starting my first business, when I was 14 and I realized I was a poor kid that went to a rich high school. Cool was that my initial motivation was proving to these other rich kids that I could be successful too. And I didn't need my parents' money, but then I was able to buy a land Rover that was brand new, and I was able to show it to my bipolar friend.

And then I felt empty in that moment because I didn't realize that all of the work I was doing was to simply to prove to him that I could be successful too. And then I had to find a new motivation. And at least for me, it was the fear of being homeless because I had a. Terrible childhood would not growing up, but I still kept that insecurity of feeling like I wasn't good enough.

And in some ways I still carry that with me, but even today, and I feel like that's also what led me to entering these relationships with these people that I thought were friends and that I could trust them. And I've learned a lot through my own failed experiences and yeah. Being manipulated and screwed over when I was young.

And I know that you've had some of [00:15:00] these experiences too. Can you tell me a little bit about the business partner that you, that you found it? What was it? Did you start best self with the business partner? Can you tell me more about that?

**Cathryn:** Yeah. So I've talked about this, but it's just this idea of entrepreneurs don't have. Business problems and personal problems, but then they disguise as business problems. So one of my personal problems that I had was just marketing and sales and talking about myself. Actually, I did, uh, I don't know if you know landmark, but I did that a few years ago in 2017 and just uncovered all of the stuff that I've been carrying from when I was a child up specifically about talking about.

Achievements. And so whenever it came time to, like, I had the idea and I was really passionate about it, but I'm like, oh, I need, I need to find someone that does sales and marketing. because I don't, I'm not very good at it. Right. And so in my, I did this entrepreneur course. And so it was a guy in that and he was always talking himself up [00:16:00] and I was like, okay, he's perfect.

And he seemed to be taking action. And so we'd started. I basically started it with him because I felt like he was the missing piece. And I think it was kind of like getting married to someone that?

you meet on Tinder after a week of knowing them is pretty much, I probably

like we came from extremely different backgrounds.

We had different values on things. We did things differently. And, and for a while it worked at the start because. Because the business was working and when the business is working, it's much easier to like skim over things. And then like by 2016, we had very different views on things.

And So then it just over time, disintegrated and he kind of left the business in 2018, still own half of it, but w stepped away. And so then it's hard because someone leaves with 50% of the business. Cause I didn't know about vesting or. You know, any of that stuff, we got 50% of our equity upfront, which looking back [00:17:00] was not a 50 50 thing, but again, it comes from this not knowing what you don't know.

And this insecurity pays is where now I don't really agree with 50 50 partnerships because it's literally your first decision. You've made a settlement, not actually a decision and. There's a lot of things I learned from that getting a great operating agreement because, an operating agreement is kind of like, like a prenup if you get married, but Everett like 50% of marriages end in divorce, but a hundred percent of businesses will end at some point.

And so you need to figure out, okay, like what happens to someone to leave? We never, we didn't know that. So he walked out with 50% of the business was still taking money every month, because if he worked in it. I wasn't taking a salary, we just got 50, 50 distributions. And then about a year and a half later, I was like, Hey, I'm working on this full time.

I need to get a salary. And he didn't think that that was, he didn't think that I should get that. And so that's, you know, where it started going downhill [00:18:00] because it wasn't really about the money. It was just like, oh, you don't really appreciate the time that I'm putting in here. And yeah, then it pretty much went downhill from there.

**Cody:** So instead of interrupting you, I let you go on your flow, but I have points that I'd like to revisit. You mentioned landmarks, so is that landmark worldwide.com. And you can just tell me a little bit about that. So that was like a online entrepreneurial course that you took.

**Cathryn:** so landmark actually wasn't it, it was an in-person I think they're doing online now, but it's a local landmark forum, which is like a personal development course and it's kind of cult-y so I will warn you of that, but. It's kind of one of those things where I say, you know, take what you like and leave the rest.

And for me, I've gone, I've done a lot of personal development from like the Tony Robbins stuff and a lot of other books and things. But this was the one that really got me understanding how I was showing up. Not because of who I am, but because of like something that happened to me when I'm like three, that then [00:19:00] completely changed how I would show up.

And so. I got a lot out of it, but I do know people that get a lot out of it, but they're like, oh, it's kind of cultish. I'm like, yeah.

**Cody:** Did it help you like uncover some childhood traumas? Like, I don't know if you've read the book that the body keeps score and how we tend to associate, like our body remembers these events in our lives, but then we mentally forget that they're there, but then we end up meshing with them throughout our day-to-day life.

And we don't know why.

**Cathryn:** Yeah. It's like the leaves of pot, physical leaves a pattern with you. And then even though you don't remember it, your body will remember that. And just assume that everything that fits into that is the same thing that happened when you were a kid. And so you will show up as if you did then even though it's not the same situation at all, your body will see it the same way.

**Cody:** Is there any kind of therapy or anything that you've done over the years to lessen that degree? Of either trauma and conflict in your past. Like how did you not give up when you've encountered these problems? Or like what, what were the biggest problems or [00:20:00] hurdles that you had to overcome? Whether it was a crappy business partner or something else?

**Cathryn:** I mean, I think it's funny. If you could see the road before you start, you might not take

it because it's like constant challenges, but I think. you'll face a problem and then you get over it and you build some confidence, then you face another problem. So problem, I might have this year and be able to get past that easily.

Might've completely taken me down a few years ago because I wouldn't know how to deal with it. And I think that's how I've been able to, consistently like get over the challenges is because. I think you're faced with a problem you can deal with in the moment and then you get over it and then you build confidence and you learn from that.

it's not like they all happen to you at once. You know, it's five years in business and I I'm dealing with an embezzlement or business partner thing. If that had happened in year one, actually the business partner thing happened much earlier than it was resolved, but I didn't know how to deal with it.

So I just ignored it. [00:21:00] Which I also wouldn't recommend, but I didn't know. I actually didn't know how to best handle it. So I just didn't. I just ignored it for a couple of years.

**Cody:** Right. And with that business partner, is that in that moment, when you were starting the business, it's like you saw him as like a piece of the puzzle and he kind of solved that is like he had these skills or the skill set that you thought you didn't. You couldn't serve yourself and you found somebody else and you thought this would be a partnership that would work.

And so how has that mental model of feeling like you need a business partner? And I know this is, this is really varies because some people, they work well with this as partners, but when you have a business partner, it introduces a lot of additional risk because it really is like a marriage. And you don't really think of it like a marriage when you first start.

So how has your, your model of, do you need a business partner or how have you. Changed your behavior? Like, do you have a operations manager that fills his role? What is your view of that now?

**Cathryn:** I mean, he wasn't really involved since 2018, so I didn't [00:22:00] really need to fill his role. It was more like, I just wanted to not. Be dealing with them anymore as far as in the company at all.

So, yeah, exactly. So he was basically just draining the company and I was tired of it, especially cause I'd been working on it so much and it just felt like if this person's not removed, I don't know what's going to happen.

So it came from there and yeah, I have a COO that's really great and much better than the business partner was at actual business things. But I think. I don't, even though everything I just add, like, I don't regret having a business partner because I was able to start and like, he was helpful in the beginning, but I think I regret the 50 50 thing.

Cause I didn't know what I didn't know at the time when I, and I discounted my skills when I shouldn't have, and so there was a lot I brought to the table that I just didn't see in myself because I wasn't good at like, standing up for myself. And then I'm partnering with someone that, that is. [00:23:00] who's all talk and like big talk about, so I'm like, oh, this is great.

But then you realize, oh actually it is more talk than, than actually action. And so I wish I hadn't have discounted my skills. I wish I had invested. So, you know, if someone walks out after two years that they're not taking half the company with them, but I think I learned a lot from that partnership as far as like what not to do.

And, you know, I would never make that mistake again. And, you know, I have had partnerships since not anything big, but like small investment type things. And it's more, it's people that I know for a long time we share the same values and I don't ha I know I'm not gonna have the same issues with them. It's also not something I'm actively working on day after day.

So it's just a different, idea. I think a lot of people partner out of insecurity because they think that they should have a partner, but I don't, I think most people would be fine with white one.

**Cody:** Yeah, I think that they're there. You're not good enough you have this deep fear of, I can't do this by myself and then you go out and search for [00:24:00] somebody and then if that person is wanting 50% of the company and perhaps it's your idea and you're leading it then. Yeah. There's so many bad situations that, that has just spiraled down and just hurt both parties.

And so I never tell anybody. And certainly my lawyers told me after having my own 50, 50 partnerships is never do a 50 50 partnership again. And then even on the, on a related note of, if you have a business, inevitably, you might've had friends that come up to you and say, Hey, can you hire me? I need a job.

And I've been in situations where I'm like, okay, I'll hire you. And then it doesn't work out for some reason. Maybe there's some kind of dispute, but then it affects the friendship. And so whenever I ask somebody is if it's okay to hire or work with a friend or a family member, I say, yes, you can, but you have to be willing to throw your friendship away.

And that's my viewpoint. I'm wondering if you have a viewpoint on that.

**Cathryn:** Yeah. I mean, I've definitely done the same thing. I think as entrepreneurs, oftentimes, one of the things we miss is like [00:25:00] an operations person. And if we're only friends with entrepreneurs, we start looking at our pool to be like, oh, maybe they can do it. And that's just never worked out. Luckily. I haven't lost any friendships over it.

but I definitely understand why I wouldn't do it. Or if, if you hire someone, they should be put in the same pool with everyone else, like, and make sure that they are qualified for the job and not just getting it. Cause they know you.

**Cody:** And so you mentioned hiring an operations person and since I I'm 30 now. And so I've been started doing businesses since, since I was 14. And I remember there was a particular moment when I realized, oh, there's a job position as an operations manager. And of course I didn't. I don't have an MBA. I didn't go to college.

So all of this stuff, I'm learning experientially, and I realized, wow, I could hire somebody that can make all of these day-to-day decisions. And we move me out of the equation. That was like a big mind opening moment for me. And I think a lot of people will either [00:26:00] want to hire a partner because they think a partner needs to fulfill that role.

But you can find somebody who can fill it. Operationally speaking and pay them a salary and they aren't an entrepreneur. What would, what was that process for you? Was that like, did you read a book at that told you that you can have an operations person and how did you go and remove yourself from the day-to-day equation?

**Cathryn:** I'm still not really removed from the day-to-day, but I'm removed. Like I laugh today. I can trust that everything's handled. I do mostly the product things more than the day to day, but I think just, it's difficult to know. By finding an operations person actually doing the right work to find the right person, because we went through people that just, we either hired entrepreneurs for it to be an operations person.

When the only thing that they wanted was to do their own business, not actually operating mine. And so it took a while and actually I hired a marketing manager and he ended up becoming the steel wall because he was doing the [00:27:00] role. Before I gave him the title. because he just saw, okay. You know, he's seeing it from a higher level view.

And actually he was doing the role before I gave it to him. And then we were putting something together. I'm like, oh yeah, we need to update your title. Cause marketing manager just seems like woefully inaccurate at this point.

**Cody:** What has always been, what's been your view take on equity. How do you now after knowing 50 50 is off the table and you already have a business. So you are a solo entrepreneur, I assume with best self. What, what is your stake in how you allocate either a salary or equity, or do you leave it up to an employee?

Just randomly curious about that.

**Cathryn:** Yeah, so we haven't given up or I haven't given up equity so far. whenever I bought my business partner, I last year I was thinking, okay, now's the time where I want to, It gives something to the employee. if there is an exit or something happens that they also benefit from it. and also one of our core values is act like owners, like why, if they, we want them to act like owners, we should make them at least a little bit of ownership.

And so I [00:28:00] did a bunch of entity changes. It started the year after the business business buyout And giving equity. To the team, moving forward. so it wasn't like asking them, it was more like, oh, this is my plan. And then I'll allocate different people, you know, whatever I feel is right. But I mean, I'll still own like 90% of it.

**Cody:** And so now you've been operating best sell for a few years. And the business side is interesting, but I'm really interested in the person behind the business and the personal growth. And I know that you're hugely in the personal growth. I know that you posted a YouTube video about how to make your own ice bath.

And I'm like, wow. Yes, you can do it because I was going to buy one, but it costs like a thousand, a couple thousand dollars. And so you, you're also posting these videos on YouTube where you're finding these creative topics, whether it's talking about Pomodoro or productivity or your previous experiences.

I myself have wanted to do YouTube for a while, but I get hung up in the anxiety about what to talk [00:29:00] about. I'm not good enough. What advice do you have for me in terms of even how to get started? And also, how did you get started? How did you go from being the person that you still are now where you're running the business, but now you're also being in front of the business.

You are your own brand and you've started that. What did you get that idea from? And what's your motivation?

**Cathryn:** I had a personal blog before I started myself and that was around like personal growth and just learnings that I was having. And whenever I would publish, I just got it. Great feedback or, or basically when I would learn something, I would teach it because it would help me better learn it and then also help other people.

And I kind of got off track with that cause I'm working on best self and I only have so much time, but I actually think that putting out content forces me to think more and create more because I'm creating it often gives me ideas for myself. So it's kind of a. A fly wheel effect, where if I'm writing and thinking and [00:30:00] publishing, I often come up with ideas that I can use for best self.

And if I don't, it's still good for the business. So it came from that. I used to be terrible on video. Like God awful. The first Kickstarter I ever did, like my own brother was like, I can't even watch this video. It's so bad. Like it's really, it was, it was rough. And so. I've gotten better at it over time.

It's still not like super natural or it's not natural for me as much as it is for others, but, you know, I have someone on my team that does video. And so just almost investing a little bit into it and. I only want not show up and come up with ideas of what we could talk about and then him doing the rest of the stuff.

So I don't have to deal with that. I know that for me, like speaking on camera and coming up with ideas is what I want to do. Not edit it, publish it, figure out what the title should be, what the thumb, like, I don't want to do any of that stuff. So finding someone to do that has been hugely helpful [00:31:00] because that's where I would get caught up.

It would be like, What are the key words for this? I'm like, oh God, I haven't done a keyword research thing. I should just not post it. And I do that for like blog posts or videos. I would just be a perfectionist. And I'm like, okay, this isn't good enough. And I wouldn't post anything. So finding someone external to do that stuff where I know that sometimes before I post a video or publish something, I'm like, oh, who cares?

Like, does anyone care about this? And I'll talk myself out of actually posting it. so taking that out of my hands and giving it to someone else is their job is much better.

**Cody:** Shout out Tyler, my producer. You're awesome. Because I want to be able to do this without you either. And just being able to, I love the flow and the connection of doing the podcast, but right. It comes to the title, the description, all that is can bog you down, but being able to externalize that to somebody else allows you in my mind to find the flow state, because that's why we do what we do is inevitably when you're writing or you're producing a video, there's something intrinsically rewarding about [00:32:00] that.

But do you have any feeling on that?

**Cathryn:** Yeah, I mean, I enjoy the creation part. I really like writing. I like coming up with ideas. I like sharing, but it's everything else. That's the friction. And so if I remove as much friction from the things that I know. We'll add value, then I'll actually do them and put them. Whereas before I had this person, I would write things and then before I publish them, I would talk myself out of it and be like, oh, this isn't very good.

They're just never posted it. And so I have all of this content or things that I would create or have interest in that I just wouldn't post because I get caught up in the minutiae of, oh, if it's not really great and I haven't done all this research, then I shouldn't post it at all.

**Cody:** And so I was around maybe 24 after I sold one of my companies. And then I read Tim Ferriss's book, the four hour work week, and I realized, oh my God, I've been doing all of this all wrong because I was doing the marketing. I was doing the operations, handling all the support tickets. I was doing the website design.

I was doing everything [00:33:00] myself and I was only outsourcing say the support or some of the phone calls. And I didn't realize that there's a whole core aspect that I thought I had to do, but in fact, I can hire other people to do. How did you go from where you were probably doing all the work you had? And I'm curious about how many employees you have today.

And if you remember, or can externalize the process of, more or less externalizing, the things that you probably know that the business needs needs to get done, but it's not something that you necessarily enjoy doing.

**Cathryn:** Yeah. so, I did everything the same as you. When I have my first business. I try to tell people like, if you can afford to pay someone else to do it, then you should do that. Because the first year, I, first year I pay taxes. I paid more in tax than I made that year, R than I made in my job the year before. Which I, but what I didn't know is I hadn't like, I wasn't really paying [00:34:00] myself, I'm doing everything. And so instead of. Getting time back and being able to pay someone else to do it. I'm using up all my time and then I'm technically more profitable, but I've spent all the time myself and then I was paying more taxes than I otherwise would have because I was scrumping on these things that, would have given me a lot of like mind share back.

How did just given it to someone else. So it took me a while to get that and then being able to delegate work, especially when you're new, because. Oh, nobody else is going to do this right. Or nobody else is going to do this as well as, I will. And so I've been able to give that up for the most part, actually pretty much for everything.

Uh, for awhile it was design was the one thing and product was the one thing that I wasn't like sort of letting go. And my team actually were just finalizing a product. Being put out shortly and what's awesome is I barely had anything to do. I literally had nothing to do with it. I did like the final review and it looks amazing and I'm like, oh, this is the [00:35:00] first time we're doing a big product that I personally wasn't slaving over.

Which for me was probably a big thing because I couldn't get out of that role for so long is because, I just was, had struggled to find someone to take sort of an idea and bring it to like a finished product.

**Cody:** Yeah. It's when, when you start as an entrepreneur, you often end up having to do everything yourself, but then as time goes on, I see two different pathways of various small entrepreneurs is one. They keep this idea of. I'm only the, I'm the only one capable of doing this and they keep themselves in the center of the business because maybe they're too afraid of being screwed over by somebody or they're afraid of giving up control, or they feel like nobody else can do it as good as they can.

But then you're constantly in a cycle where you can burn out and your stress and you can't take a vacation. And I still have friends that are like that. And on the other hand, you start can [00:36:00] slowly giving away certain parts of the company. And if you can do it and just a slow enough manner, then you're able to outsource a lot of the things that aren't very enjoyable as an entrepreneur.

And then the more successful you become, the more you're able to enter that flow state about doing the work that is intrinsically rewarding. And I think that's the best place to be as an entrepreneur.

**Cathryn:** oh, yeah, for sure. It's been, I think, and then also creating a team where you. There's trust within the team, but also you trust people to do their job, which seems like, oh yeah, of course. But I think it takes a while to get to that place where you can just really trust the team to, if you go on vacation, you're not worried about it.

Or like checking slack or your email all the time, because you understand that they, that they know what to do.

**Cody:** Right. And so you mentioned something about you. I don't know that you mentioned that you were an introvert in this conversation, but I know you mentioned that in one of your YouTube videos about [00:37:00] networking. And so now I've seen that you're you've. Hung out with Nat Neville. And I know there's a great group of people here in Austin that you've been able to connect with.

How did you get to that point of having either the confidence or even reaching out to them or building these connections where you're creating genuine value for others. But you're also able to build that network because I find that's rewarding, but I can also see a lot of people. even myself included where we just get hung up on, oh, I'm not good enough.

And I shouldn't reach out to this person or I dunno. Do you have any, any thoughts on how you went from just this introvert with no connections to somebody who is really well connected in the entrepreneurship community?

**Cathryn:** Yeah, so I think for me, it also came back to the insecurity piece as far as. never asking for anything, but always providing value to try to show that, oh, I'm, I deserve to be here that I'm showing up for myself and others. And so most of the people that, I know it's like we, maybe we connected or I helped them [00:38:00] out with something and then it started, I'll just offer help if I can help.

And for most of the people that you just mentioned, it was something like that. It was like, oh, I saw something they needed. And I sent it without really thinking anything of it and like not, and I met on Twitter and then he was building out a cafe and I used to be an architect. So I was like, oh, if you need to find, and then we became friends a lot of the relationships had been from that sort of, oh, offering help or giving help without asking, but not really to network.

Cause I don't really like that term. It was more of like showing myself and others that I was valuable. That's looking back What, it was like and also understanding that I'm actually not very good if I go to a party and not talking to everyone in the room, I'll be exhausted, but like I will go deep with three or four people and. I'll make a deeper connection with them. Then, you know, other peers that are talking to everyone and, and [00:39:00] because I'll like not have surface level conversations because I get bored by that. And it's not interesting for me. So, and then I'll Irish exit when I'm done, I'll just leave

**Cody:** What, what's an Irish exit.

**Cathryn:** Irish exit.

is just, I think it's supposed to be like a controversial term, but it comes from like an Irish person getting so drunk that they just disappear for me. It's more like. I don't say goodbye at an event. I just leave because I don't want to have to go back and say goodbye to everyone. That's exhausting. I don't want to interrupt the conversation and say goodbye. Cause then someone either might ask me to stay, which I don't want to do. and also that I'm making, turning their conversation into a conversation about me leaving.

So instead of ignoring all that, I just, when I'm ready, I like peace out.

**Cody:** Yeah. I remember reading it, having the same anxiety and seeing that come up and. I think there was some authority figure that said it depends on the group size. If it's a large group. Yes. You can just leave. If it's a smaller group, then out of respect, you should say like, oh, I'm leaving bye guys. [00:40:00] yeah, I guess everybody has their own different preference levels for that.

**Cathryn:** Yeah. I mean, if it's a small group I'll or if I come with someone, but I'm not going to just leave the person there, but, if it's a party or bigger events, Like my old business partner, you would know like, oh, where's Kat. Oh, she left like an hour ago. Like without me even saying, I was just like, oh yeah, I peaced out.

And then I'll text them when I leave. I'm like, okay.

I know as an insurer, when my energy level is like, now I'm tired. And if I meet someone you get in that space, the reason I executives, cause I don't want to meet anyone new because if I meet. Then low energy, then that will be the perception.

Cause you can never get another first impression. And so I leave so that I don't meet someone, You and them and create a bad first impression.

**Cody:** You said something earlier, you said showing myself and others that I am valuable. And that strikes a chord in me because that is a powerful statement is I think through our, our entire lives, we try to just consistently prove to ourselves that we are good enough [00:41:00] that we can be loved. And I feel chills thinking about that because that's been a battle my entire life.

And I feel like a lot of the work I've done as an entrepreneur, I've looked at my entire grade and I'm. 99% sure on the most successful person in my grade, but I'm also, I was considered the weirdest and the most unlike person in my grade. And so there has to be a correlation that my inability to be within the group really pushed me to try and Excel at this thing, that society.

Actually says that they admire. So internally, I said, I am going to be very successful and make a lot of money and then people will like me. And now I'm S I've seen the, the disconnect between that, but I'm just curious if you've had any, if you feel that or in any way. Yeah.

**Cathryn:** Yeah, I mean, for sure, I think. Until, like, I didn't actually know entrepreneurship was a thing, like that you could own your own business because I had an eBay store when I was 13 and I was always, I was like selling things on the playground when I was seven, but when I'm, [00:42:00] you know, 13, and then I'm like, oh, I have to get serious about school and like, actually get a job.

but I always, when I was at school, like I wasn't unpopular, I was friends with everyone. But I didn't really care about the same stuff as them. So like when I had an eBay store and it was doing well, I wouldn't tell anyone. Cause it was kind of weird. Like didn't really want to stand out as sort of like being strange, but I never really fit in until I, I became friends with more entrepreneurs and was interested in the same stuff.

But at school I wasn't really like, I did fine, but. I didn't really care and I didn't connect it to, it was like, okay, this is what you do to get a job. And the, but I didn't really care about it. And I didn't connect it to like success. It just felt like something I had to do to like go through the motions.

And it's only since, uh, like I didn't think that I was, I liked reading or I was into that. I wasn't very organized. Um, there was a lot of stuff that I felt as a student that [00:43:00] night. If you looked at what I do now, it's like, yeah, I read books and I write book notes and I like write just like, that's not who I was when I was at school, but I just, I wasn't tying it to the longterm thing, nor did I want to be seen as like, strange for doing like something that was seen as, you know, not normal.

**Cody:** Has there been any interesting experiences that you've had that has profoundly shifted the way that you view yourself or others, or has helped you in some way off the top of your head?

**Cathryn:** I think just like being able to like move to the U S and build a business and hire people and create jobs like that. For me, like if I could look back at, you know, eight years ago and tell myself that this was me, I'd be like this isn't sand. so it's more of like, I. I'm proving myself to myself over time.

But another thing that I find I find is cool that I have people from my high school that reached out to me at random time. And it's no one that I was like, they weren't even my grid. They were just people that I [00:44:00] kind of knew. And they're like, Hey, I'm starting this. Like I started this business or whatever, because where I'm from, there's not a lot of people that start their own business.

And so they're reaching out to me to just tell me, cause I'll understand. Um, And I went back to my, my high school last many to give us a talk a couple of years ago nine, I went back and it was sort of like almost telling them the opposite of what I was like, you know, the weird kids are the ones that are gonna like, do something different.

So like, don't be afraid for it to be weird, but it's been moments like that where I, I see like the old me and the new me and understanding and seeing like the, the difference, which I don't see myself. Because it's been slow and over time, but it's only when I see this like glimpse of old me that I'm like, oh, that's pretty cool.

**Cody:** Yeah, there's this thing. When we grow up and we go to school in particular, we want to fit in. And so we suppressed. The [00:45:00] things that actually make us unique because we're going to get made fun of, and I've run into 40 and 50 year olds that still have this mindset where they view themselves in the same way in this, in the, whatever the social position they had in high school or college is the same way that they view themselves.

And it's hard, but that's, I think in many ways, the key to success is embracing your weirdness. And I know I'm a pretty rare person and the more weird I've expressed myself, the more other people have. They liked that and they appreciate that and they can see the authenticity within that. And instead of trying to mold who I am to fit somebody else's persona and the more I fit my with my own persona, the more I feel good about myself.

So it's an interesting,

**Cathryn:** yeah. it's funny. I like, I built an ice bath in my backyard just cause I felt like it. And. yeah, I'm kind of weird.

**Cody:** I want to end just on asking around your personal routine and your books, because I know that you read a lot. And so how do you get an, all [00:46:00] that reading? How do you separate all the time that you spend in the business with your personal growth? What's that

**Cathryn:** so I think just, I really enjoy learning. for me, it's more of a. It's an energizing activity for me to be like reading or learning and some things it's a little frustrating. Cause when you run a company, it's actually not beneficial sometimes for you to be the one that's learning, you should be getting your team to learn something.

But I love like tinkering and like learning new things. So to be honest, like getting out of the day to day, I still love like tinkering and learning just for my own interests. And then as far as reading, I'm making time for that. It's just like having some sort of ritual that you're doing it every day.

so for me it doesn't feel like work, so it's easy for me to make time for it, it also gives me ideas for the business. So, you know, during the day I'll read like nonfiction books, like business books or something, but at night I don't want to read [00:47:00] those because they might give me ideas and I'm trying to turn my brain off.

So I'll read like fiction. To sort of tell myself and stories that I go to sleep. So I personally just enjoy that stuff. So it's not hard for me to make time for it, but there was times in my business when I'm so focused on the business, that I would sort of fall off routines. And I find that when I would fall off, like my days didn't go as well.

And so it's actually for the business that I know that I have to keep my routines in, so that I'm as as I, as I can be.

**Cody:** Right. It's a balance that consumption versus that creation to have that balance that's important in any relationship, even with yourself.

**Cathryn:** Yeah.

for me, I find like if I consume too much, I get annoyed with myself. I'm like, oh, I should be doing this. so my, my body tells me, like, when I get I'm like, you should be doing more of this. And then, I learned from them like, okay, let me go and work on something myself instead of consuming something else.

**Cody:** Yeah, that can be the hardest thing to balance that [00:48:00] creative drive that you have of wanting to create something, but then also needing to pull yourself back because otherwise you'll end up burning out and just becoming too stressed. So, yeah, it's important balance to also focus on yourself because that's the foundation that your business really stands on.

**Cathryn:** Yeah.

**Cody:** I think that that's it for now. I'd love to talk again, but thank you for

being on the podcast.

**Cathryn:** Yeah, this was great. Thanks for having me.

[00:49:00]