

Kathryn: Podcasting from Dallas Texas, you're listening to Compass, where we talk with location independent women about finding work and getting paid. I'm your host Kathryn Hunter and you're listening to episode 4 with Kate Buck Jr Social Media Strategist and World Traveler. Today we're talking about getting into multiple income streams, creating your own promotions, and asking for the money. Kate, welcome to the show.

Kate: Hey, thanks for having me.

Kathryn: So I'd like to start a little bit with your early life to kind of see where that influences you later on. What did you want to be when you were five?

Kate: That's really funny. I wanted to be a ballerina. I wanted to be a dancer, and I studied dance from about that time that I was five years old until, actually that's what my degree is in. I got a degree in dance from University of North Texas and I graduated at the age of 23. So ballet was my life for a very long time.

Kathryn: So do you use anything from your degree in what you do now?

Kate: I don't really think so with the exception that, you know, I learned stage performance and all of that stuff. So now when I speak, although I don't know that it's really helped completely. But, I just kind of perform now, but in a different, in my career, but in a different way. Yeah. I don't really use it, but I could, I could stretch and find ways.

Kathryn: Yeah, it has its influences, but it's not a primary.

Kate: Right. I mean, where the connection was made is, you know, when I graduated school, dance teachers, you know, don't make a lot of money. And so I got day jobs helping people in their home offices. And I think that is what sort of led me to where I am today, is that I was helping these Mary Kay directors with their newsletters and you know, their websites and their, you know, their business. And that was really my first sort of interaction or soiree with what I'm doing now.

Kathryn: How do you describe your job or what's the short version when people are just kind of being a little bit curious?

Kate: Well, it's much easier now to say that I'm a social media manager or a social media strategist, more accurately in this later part of my career. But in the beginning it was very hard to describe what I did for people. So really, you know, that's what I do. I am a social media manager. I assist people or companies or projects and nonprofits with understanding how to translate what they're doing and to the digital space.

Kathryn: In the day to day, what does a social media manager or strategist do?

Kate: Well, those two things are quite different. In the beginning I, you know, the social media manager does a lot of doing, so would be like making images and crafting posts and scheduling things and you know, really in the tools and the trenches and making sure stuff is there, you know, that the tactical plan is implemented And now I can take a step

out of the tactics and the day to day and really work on the strategy that defines what the tactics will be. Does that make sense? So most of the time now what I'm doing is, I am mostly training and teaching, which is awesome. So I spend a lot of time creating strategies for clients and then working with their social media manager to, to train them on how to implement them.

Kathryn: So the social media strategist creates the overarching plan and then the social media manager acts on it?

Kate: Yes. And a lot of times it's the same person. I have just been doing this for 10 years and I don't want to be the social media manager anymore. Occasionally I do take it on when it's fun, but a lot of times that's this, it's the same role. But I've really separated them in a way that I can work with clients that I don't have to be in the day to day and I can just be sort of advising and guiding and strategizing and teaching, which is a place where I'm much happier.

Kathryn: How did you get started with what you're doing?

Kate: So, like I mentioned, I was teaching dance and I was kind of doing all of these day jobs and I just got an introduction to somebody who knew that I was good with computers and they hired me for I'm a full time job with a company that I was already location independent because that company was located in San Francisco. And I lived in Austin at the time and they, they didn't have any more capacity at their headquarters anyway, and they didn't want to pay a lot for the roles. So it made sense to keep it somewhere besides San Francisco. As a matter of fact, the person whose job I was taking was leaving because he couldn't afford to have even live in San Francisco with a roommate on the salary. And for me as a young, professional living in Austin, Texas, it was like a dream job. So that's how I kinda got started. But then that job, you know, I learned a lot while I was there and when that job ended, the company decided not to keep working on the project and I got laid off. I wanted to keep doing what I was doing. Like, I had found that it was fun. I liked working on the Internet. I was, helping people with logging in and discussion groups and making profiles. This was all the height of Myspace and you know, Facebook had just launched and I wanted to keep doing it, but I didn't know what it was. And so I just started doing research and trying to network, so that I could find another job. But I, I'm sure everyone can relate. Like you've been to that place where you take work, anything that comes your way just to try to make ends meet while you're transitioning sort of from one thing to the other. And, I just did that for so long that after about six or nine months, I realized that I could do this without getting hired and getting a job. And so I just sort of shifted my mindset to go all in and kind of learn, the business side of being a freelancer or of being a social media manager.

Kathryn: So the job in San Francisco was being as a social media manager before that was actually a thing?

Kate: Yeah, I kind of, it was called a community administrator. I worked my way up to be the community manager. It was kind of more like a Craigslist style site where you could post listings, but there was a discussion forum section, a very, very early discussion forum section where people could chat with each other and talk about whatever was

important to them. So there was a role sort of called community manager that was beginning to come about, but it wasn't as clearly defined as it is now. And certainly the term social media manager was not a term at all. It wasn't, it wasn't used at all. And then there was a point in time shortly after where I'm talking about where it became important to define which one that you were because one is very outward, social media manager is very outward facing. Like the marketing side where you're reaching new customers to bring them in. And the community manager is more, the person who manages the community once someone is already sort of a part of it, for a very basic sort of definition. And the skills and the roles do kind of cross over at times. But you know, the question becomes, are you are in the marketing team or are you sort of on the internal customer retention team? And so there's this, now there's a definition and they're sort of two roles, but you know, in 2009 there were none.

Kathryn: Yeah. There were no roles. It was just doing what was there.

Kate: Yes. I remember seeing this girl Julia Roy, who had used social media to help raise money after Hurricane Katrina and had gained some notoriety for that. And her blog was that she was at digital girl living in a digital world. That was her tagline, being the Madonna fan that I am, I was like, that's it. That's what I want to be, you know, that's, you know, do so.

Kathryn: So when you decided to go freelance, how did you get your first clients? Was it networking? Cold emailing?

Kate: It was all networking. So my, when I got the pink slip from my job, you know, and I knew I was getting laid off, I asked for an extension. It was right around this time of year. It was around the holidays. Well depending on when this podcast airs, but nevermind. It was around the holidays and so I asked for an extension on my... So that I wouldn't be laid off until December 31st so that I could get through Christmas with my family. They were very gracious and approved that. So, I spent the last couple of months of my job, not really having much to do and I just kept hearing through all this research of like going to Google and saying, community manager, community administrator, you know, like blogger, whatever the words were. Everybody was on Twitter, Twitter, had... It was 2009 to 2008 actually, Twitter had just started becoming really popular outside of San Francisco having launched at South by Southwest. So I just kept hearing from everybody that if I wanted to work in this space that I had to be on Twitter. So I followed the advice and I got on twitter and I just started connecting with anybody I could. I didn't know anything and there weren't rules. So I followed anybody and anybody that I thought was interesting or that had a following or that said they were worked in digital marketing, you know, like very early Chris Brogans and Gary Vaynerchuks and Matt Calliers. And there was just this really cool tribe of people that I ended up meeting because of that time. And then I just did my best to try to land jobs. So my very first client I got because of somebody that I met through Twitter, he had 1500 followers at that time, was an entrepreneur living in Austin, Texas. And to me, those were all signs at the time. He had a big following. He was a business owner, entrepreneur. And he lived in my city, that potentially down the road he may have work for me. So I continued to remain connected with him. I met him in person at a, at a meetup.com group that I saw him tweeting about and he didn't actually hire me, but he did refer me to my first client that

was a friend of his that lived in Atlanta. And you know, just he did, he referred me but then he sort of disappeared. And so I really had to do the following up and make that first client really happen. So I had to reach out and say, you know, can we chat about this? I heard that you need some help. Maybe I don't, I'm not sure if, you know, your friend mentioned me to you, but you know, so that, that was my very first client and that was really my introduction into the freelance world.

Kathryn: And after that first client, was it easier to build?

Kate: What became easier after that first client is me figuring out what a social media manager would do. Because right now you, you know, there's a lot of information out there that would say, okay, what should I be doing? But back then it was like just help this person with their social media. So that first client was really like my guinea pig to help me figure out what are the activities that I should do for a person, if they're going to pay me to be their social media assistant. That's what we called it back then. And, and then I always say, I feel like I was very fortunate, that first client was also sort of an influencer in, in his own space. And so it was easier because I had access to people that were wanting to learn what he was doing. But besides those clients, you know, it was really challenging back then to describe to most people why this would help them and why they should do it. And there was still a lot of conversation about that it was a fad and it was not going to last. And you know, it was a stupid waste of time, all of that. So that part about getting clients was very challenging. But what I did just sort of naturally was, I was just helpful. I was trying to learn as much as I could. So I tried to help answer as many questions as I could for people and I liked being online and I liked doing all of these things. So it was very natural for me to chat with people about movies and like other things that were not like sort of like these official follow up type conversations. And because of these things, people would remember me when it was time to hire someone. So I don't know if it was easy. I don't know if it got easy or it did give me a little bit of confidence, in that, you know, that I could do it if I, if I wanted to pursue this, that there was an opportunity. It was more like validation, sort of and confirmation that this was a legitimate opportunity that someone would pay people to do this.

Kathryn: What would you say your first major struggle was?

Kate: My first major struggle, well, was in asking for money for sure. And also around understanding how to set boundaries with clients. And later that would translate even into paying people to work for me and setting boundaries and expectations with them so that those are two kind of skills or whatever that aren't very natural, don't come very natural to me. So I was afraid to ask for money. I undercharged. If people didn't pay me, I just, you know, hid under the table. If they asked me to do more than what I had, you know, originally agreed to, I would say yes because I wanted them to be happy. And so that first year, two, maybe even two years of my business was kind of a disaster, where I was working way more than I was getting paid. Looking back, I think, now having trained like thousands of people, I think everybody goes through that phase. I think you're sort of sorting things out for yourself, if you don't come from a background of having been a consultant or a professional and really knowing your worth and your value. And let's say you're transitioning from working in retail or you know, hospitality and wanting to start a career for yourself in this space, it's totally possible. Or, transitioning to go location

independent, right? But not having that... I demand to make, you know, six figures a year, whatever it is. So those first couple of years I really felt like, and maybe even always sort of, I felt like I do more than what is agreed upon because I don't like people being mad at me. And I, it was a long time, I struggled with asking for money and asking for what I was worth. So that just took experience and confidence and, the first piece of advice I ever got around the business part was three months in, at South by Southwest in 2009 a guy named Paul Cheney was really impressed with, kind of having come out of nowhere and what was all going on. And he told me that if people were saying yes to the price, if everyone was saying yes, that I wasn't asking enough and if I was too busy that I couldn't take on any more clients, that I wasn't charging enough either. And so every time I ask for money, I try to ask for a little bit more than I did last time. And when I'm really busy, it's very easy to demand a really high number or to ask for a really high number because I'm just very busy. So, that one...

Kathryn: You don't care if they walk away.

Kate: Yeah. I don't, I have a friend right now that really wants me to help him launch his tee shirt company. And, I know he will be a troublesome client. Working with friends is not a good idea. But I do really believe in his idea and I do want to help him, but I'm extremely, my plate is full right now. So in order to help him, I can't give him like a friend rate or whatever. So it's those little moments that actually are very helpful in reminding yourself. But by the other hand, you know, it was Christmas and I did take on one extra client last month that I probably shouldn't have and that is now kind of turning out to not be a good thing because I gave her a discount and she, you know, is really expecting more than even if she had paid full price. And so, you know, the lessons don't go away with experience, they just kind of, you learn them, relearn them on a different level, I think.

Kathryn: This is not the first time we've heard that the cheapest clients cause the most issues.

Kate: Yeah, I thought it was a great thing. I was like, you know what? This is randomly coming my way. It'll be easy. A little extra, like I said, money for the holidays to buy some gifts and I'm thinking of it as one of those like Adam and Eve moments. I bit the apple and now look what happened. Maybe not quite as dramatic.

Kathryn: Let's hope not. So what would you say was your first major success?

Kate: That's a good question. I think somehow I planted in my mind that when I made \$10,000 a month that I would feel like I had made it. And towards the end of my first year, beginning of my second year, I think really maybe the end of the first year when I started realizing that I was making like six, seven, eight grand a month and I was on my way to what I thought my goal was, was when I started to feel successful. Certainly when I got my first client to 100,000 Twitter followers, that was a huge success because that was a big goal that kind of everybody was working on. Aside from my freelance business, I also landed a big publishing deal about 18 months into my, that that launched about 18 months into my career and that brought me a huge financial windfall, which was great and a lot of notoriety. So, when I look back on my life as a whole, that moment was huge for me. But like, for a personal win, like a very, very

personal when the end of that first year when I've had filed my tax returns and I made almost the same amount as I made at my job, but I did it on my own was huge when I hit 10 grand a month. That was huge. And then also I do remember at one time getting invited to speak at the event that I had gone, that very first meetup that I had gone to where I met my very first client, shortly after I was invited to speak there sometime during my second year in business. And that was like one of those also very private triumphant moments of going back home. But being on the stage instead of being in the audience.

Kathryn: Odds are there's no such thing as a typical day for you. Do you want to give us a random day?

Kate: Well, I mean, typical days are, well, it depends on if I'm traveling or not by the way. But, most days I'm spending time, I mean if you're a fly on the wall looking at what I'm doing, a, I'm talking on the phone, I'm teaching and training, I'm working with my clients, coaching, giving them direction. Most recently, like right now again, timing. Just around this time of year, most people are working on their end of year reports and planning for next year based on the numbers that they see. So I've spent this week working with a couple of different clients on pulling together those reports and how to present the data to their managers and how to plan, you know, their activities for next year to improve those results and how to ask for what they need in order to do that. I, besides talking on the phone, I answer a lot of messages and emails. I do a lot of communicating in that way. So people wanting to chat about something. A new client coming in, responding to slack messages about, you know, projects that I'm working on it, it's pretty flexible and fluid. But any number of those activities kind of get juggled, get juggled around. What is not there is you're not seeing me spend a lot of time actually even on social media, it's not really all that essential to my role at this point in time. In the past you would have, it would have been something like, you know, wake up and kind of follow up, answer emails, do my stuff and then jump in immediately into a client project and start scheduling their content or making their posts or running my stats or writing a blog post or making a video or you know, whatever those things are for other clients. That was a good portion of my career up until the last couple of years.

Kathryn: And so that's, that's the day to day difference between social media strategy and social media management?

Kate: Yeah, pretty much. Pretty much. I mean, I just hop, for the most part I hop from call to call throughout the day working with a social media manager. And then when I'm not on calls, like I might be putting together a client strategy, you know, or putting, I do a lot of slideshare presentations and trainings, so I'm spending a lot of time and training mode, you know, and right now we're getting, you know, we're relaunching a course. So that's even more exaggerated that anytime that I'm not teaching or training with someone, I'm generally working on slides for teaching and training other people. But it's really great, cause it, the calls for me, I mean it just really works great for me because I mean I've jokingly said before that if I could just get paid to talk and think which it was, which was one of my ultimate goals at some point in my career was to get out of the doing and to not have to do that anymore. That really chains you to your computer, you know, and it really chains you to your desk and chains you to good internet and, and

deadlines and really a lot of expectations. And the coaching and the training transfers those deadlines and expectations to someone else and just requires you to be responsible for producing the outcome with that person. And I like that better.

Kathryn: Do you keep up with any kinds of continuing education?

Kate: I consume a lot of information so, I don't really probably have a formal continuing education. When I feel like I need to learn again, I actually will go back into the doing and take on a client where I'm doing the doing cause that's when I learn. But I definitely like keep up with reading. I go to conferences, I've watched webinars, I see what people are up to. So I try to keep my finger on the pulse of what are the cutting edge tactics that are being used in this space. There's so much about what's happening in the online space, that the education of it is not happening in a formal setting. So that lends itself to just kind of like rogue ways of gathering information.

Kathryn: So now it's time to get into some numbers. What would you say your salary range is and give us a total of about how long you've been doing the work.

Kate: So besides my three years in corporate, I'm actually going to celebrate my 10 year anniversary online and about two weeks of the, my first day with that first freelance client. So all in total, about 13 years in this space, maybe longer if you count the time I was working for the Mary Kay directors and doing their websites, but nonetheless, officially 10 years as a freelancer and I can say that most years, I'm shooting for it depending on what projects I'm working on, I'm shooting for a hundred grand and that is pretty consistent. I have an information product, you know, a side business that it, depending on my level of involvement with that. And that sort of also depends on how much client work I have. Like when I don't have a lot of client work, I tend to focus on that because it's a stream of income. When I do have a lot of client work, I'm ending up focusing on that. Right now I'm trying to focus on both because I really liked my information product. I can make, I can make three or four times and I have made three or four times my yearly goal when I focus on that information product. So, while my client work is consistent and reliable, I really want to make money more independently, even from the clients. I came up with something last year where I was like, I think I'm ready now for my clients to not be my boss or my customers, to not be the boss, my boss, if that makes any sense. So instead of being in b2b to move to b2c, and so I'm kind of trying to make that transition right now, but if I don't make a hundred grand in a year, then it was a, it was a bad year.

Kathryn: Okay. And for people who are new to the space, b2b is business. b2c is...

Kate: Customers. Yeah, business to customer. Right? So I'm selling to the consumer versus selling to other businesses. So my information product would be, my customer is just a random person that, like I mentioned, maybe wants to make this transition to online or wants to learn how to be a social media manager. So while they are sort of becoming a business owner, they're really more like a person going into a bookstore to buy a book with information. So that's the customer, versus on the client side, I'm selling generally to might even be like that same person, right? It could be that same person, but they have a business or a project that they want to move forward and they

want to use social media to do that, right? To make money or whatever it is. So I'd like to move more towards the side where when I say like that, my client is not also, you know, my customers and also my boss. When you have a client, it's their project and even though you're the consultant and they're hiring you, you still, like at the end of the day it's still their business and they own it. So the way the project goes and you know, sometimes how the strategy gets implemented, is there's a lot of factors that are outside of your control because it's not your business. And so I'd like to work on less of those projects where the outcome is not entirely up to me and more on my own projects where the outcome is entirely up to me.

Kathryn: What would you say the beginning salary range is?

Kate: So that very first year I made \$45,000 and then after expenses that came out until like around \$30,000. I know that doesn't sound like a lot, but I think in the beginning, you know, unless you have a solid background in this space or you're just really good at sales, one of those two things, like you just love selling and you're really good at it, then you should expect to see somewhere between like \$30,000 to \$60,000, maybe a little more or a little less, range if you're just starting out to be a freelancer. Now, if even if you're not good at selling but you have been, like a marketing executive somewhere and you're hearing this and you just want to make the transition to freelance, then I think you've got enough experience and background or whatever to like ask for more because you have some, some history in that space. And like I have a friend right now who works at a bank and she's in sales and marketing and is wanting to do some more consulting outside of her day job. And so I think in that case she can come out of the gate and you know, ask for higher consulting fees, than someone who said, okay, I have been doing something totally unrelated and now I want to be a consultant.

Kathryn: And what would you say the top salary range would be?

Kate: There's different pathways that you can take in this field. So if it's just you and you just only want to work on clients by yourself, then I think really like shooting for six figures or between \$100,000 to \$150,000. I think that's just what's manageable because, or what's feasible just because if you're doing all of the work yourself, there's only so much time in the day. There's only so many clients that you can take on. There are a lot of people that grow agencies and decide to bring on people to help them and to support them in different roles and take a totally different approach. And with that, I mean the sky is the limit, but then you're really changing yourself, you know, changing. And I tried to do that. I did it for a while and I didn't like it. So I came back, sort of home to being a freelancer versus trying to build an agency. I think if you're trying to build an agency, you're dipping your toe back in that having a job thing, because it becomes this more structured thing that requires more time and attention. But the benefit is you can make infinitely more money, exponentially more money, whatever, because you have more resources. You have a team and so you can take on more clients. And then there's the information product side. If you can find your way into teaching and training and doing courses, there's also a lot of opportunity there. But I think most of the successful freelance social media managers that I know that might be doing some speaking and some coaching and some digital courses and some whatever are making, you know, between \$100,000 and maybe \$250,000 a year. But when you're getting to that other



limit, you're starting to have a little bit of a team, like people that you're paying to help you and you know, all of that.

Kathryn: What factors go into deciding what to charge?

Kate: There's two factors. There's sort of what you think your time is worth on your end, and the other factor is what is the end result worth to the business. So the same product that I have charged as little as \$1,500 for to do a strategy, I have also charged a client \$10,000 for, there's no more or less work for me inside of that product. Maybe a little bit more on the, on the other end just because when you can charge that much for a client, there's a little bit more meetings and you know, more data to take in. But it was just the difference mostly was that there was just a bigger company and I knew that if they used this strategy that the value to them was greater than the person, like the mom and pop coffee shop or something that would, I would charge \$1500 for the same strategy. So you know, it's really like if you look at your, for yourself about, how much do you want to make and how long does it take you to do something. I never charged by the hour. But if I try to figure out about how long it takes me to do something and how much do I want to make during that time, I also have to, I can come up with a number, but I also need to factor in is that number going to produce, what will that produce in the business? And if it's a good business that has a lot of stuff dialed in and just a couple of tweaks will make a huge difference, then it's worth it, you know, to charge more. And of course we talked earlier about your time is also worth how busy you are. So I'm factoring in my time and how busy I am and all of that to come up with a number and then what's the impact on the business?

Kathryn: So what are your next steps?

Kate: Right now I'm doing actually a huge revamp on Social Media Pro. So I've created two new courses this year. But it's all really part of an intention to get back out and travel. Ultimately I really just want to be focusing on Social Media Pro and I want to get out and travel. I launched a podcast this year, so I want to get back to focusing on that and just kind of doing some of my own projects. I think those are my next steps, is to kind of get some things in place that will allow me to not even really have to do too much client work and still get to travel and do the things that I want to do in life. So that's what I'm focused on.

Kathryn: And where can listeners find you?

Kate: Well, I'm Kate Buck Jr on all the social platforms. I think I mostly hang out on Pinterest and Facebook, mostly Facebook, then Pinterest. Oh, Instagram too. But I have Twitter, I have all of them. So you can find me there and we'll get all of those in the show notes. Yeah, just Kate Buck Jr. And then I have a website too called, for my consulting business called kbjonline.com, if you're just curious about sort of how to set up a website for yourself that way. But my course is called Social Media Pro and that's what I've been teaching for eight years. The how to get started and if this is something that you want to do as a career, then you know how to package and price and all the contracts and how to get clients. And then all the stuff of what to do when you get a client is in Social Media Pro. We also have an online community where you can ask questions and

connect with other social media professionals and ask us questions. We do weekly trainings, so we keep it really up to date by bringing on other guest experts to, for you to learn from. And we now also have a directory where you can list yourself to meet other potential clients through our social media manager directory. So it's lots of good stuff going on in there.

Kathryn: Very nice.

Kate: Yeah, I'm really proud of, it's like eight years of work, although I've stepped away from it a couple of different times. We've helped so many people, there's hundreds of testimonials of people who have taken the training and learned enough to be confident enough to go out and, and get their first client. People have quit their jobs, people have gotten bigger jobs, people have, you know, just anything you can imagine. If there's a goal for yourself and wanting to have an online business, I think that social media is just one really easy avenue to learn. You know that you know how to use social media already because you use it yourself personally. So the transition is understanding how to apply those things too and make them useful for a business. And once you can kind of start to begin to understand that, then you can go out and charge people to tweet, in your pajamas. And I think we'll have a link for that in the show notes as well.

Kathryn: So, we definitely will. Okay, thank you so much for joining us. This has been fun and informative.

Kate: You're very welcome. Thanks for having me.

Kathryn: Thank you for listening to Compass. You'll find today's show notes at [compasspod.com/episode004](http://compasspod.com/episode004). If you enjoyed this show, please share it with a friend, by visiting [compasspod.com/episode004](http://compasspod.com/episode004) and clicking the share buttons at the top of the page. Next week we'll be talking to Elizabeth Potts Weinstein, a small business attorney.