

Kathryn: Podcasting from Fairfield Connecticut, 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 10 with Michelle Ward, career coach. Today we're talking about bridge jobs, listening to your inner voice, and her Oh Crap Balls moment. Michelle, welcome to the show.

Michelle: Thank you so much for having me, Kathryn. I'm excited to be here.

Kathryn: So, I like to start with your early life to see where that influences you later on. What did you want to be when you were five?

Michelle: Ooh, I was one of those annoying people that just knew the answer to this question of I think by the time I was five, I always want it to be an actress and I wanted to be on Broadway. And I'm trying to think of that started that little. When I was five, I just probably wanted to be like Punky Brewster, specifically. But by the time I was 10, it was like I want to be on Broadway. And that was my thing for a long time.

Kathryn: So, did you go to college?

Michelle: I did. I went to NYU's Tisch School of the arts, and I majored in musical theater. So I took the Broadway thing very, very seriously.

Kathryn: And is there anything from that that you use now?

Michelle: Oh yeah, for sure. You know, it's really interesting because in the work that I do now in my business as the When I Grow Up Coach, I work with creative women to help them discover, launch, and build their dream businesses. And when I started, before I even had my certification as a life coach, which made me feel, okay, this is what's gonna make me qualified to coach. I just had my own story of following this dream of mine that didn't work out the way that I wanted it to and having to proactively change course for myself. And so just experiencing that and kind of chasing that dream and being a creative woman myself, I feel like I am uniquely able to understand my clients and their plight. And a big reason why I became The When I Grow Up Coach and it, and did the work that I've been doing for the last 10 plus years.

Michelle: It's because I couldn't find my own career coach that like understood me and kind of the nontraditional ways that my brain works and the career that I wanted for myself. So that's a big piece. And I think too, I remember very specifically when I taught my first class on on Creative Live, which is a really cool platform that has live classes and when they're live, they're free, but you could access them at any time and pay for them. And they're set up is kind of like you're in a television studio. So when you're a teacher there's like live television cameras and a live studio audience and that's how they record your class. And I remember standing up there and saying to myself, "Oh, this is the culmination of everything. This is the culmination of my education, of my passion, of my schooling, of the work that I've been doing as a coach."

Michelle: At that point, I think my first class was right around, oh 2014. No, even earlier than that, maybe 2012. And I had been coaching at that point for probably about four years. And I guess what, Oh, this is where it all makes sense. And I tell my clients a lot, especially those and the discovery phase, there's going to be a point where you're going to figure out what it is you want to do and everything's going to make sense in hindsight. But it's really hard to see that in the moment.

Kathryn: How did you first get into being location independent?

Michelle: I think a lot of it was, was logistics with my life. So I kind of look back on this and say like, what? Why did things happen this way? I didn't mean for them too, but when I decided to become, The When I Grow Up Coach and get my coaching certification, the first thing that I did was get a job. And I lived in New York City. At the time I was living with my boyfriend. It was before we got engaged. Now he's my husband. So you know, to live in New York City is to, you know, when you, you're not a trophy wife and you don't have a trust fund is to like really have to obviously make the money and pay your bills, if you want to keep living there. So, the very first thing that I did was to get what I call now a bridge job, get a job that would allow me to, take back as much time and energy as I could give myself, so that I could devote it to my certification at the time and to growing my business. And that would allow me, would give me the money that I needed so I didn't have to worry about money.

Michelle: And so I found a job as an executive assistant and at a financial consulting firm, which still makes me laugh because it's such a bad personality fit for me, but it was exactly what I needed. There was no overtime, because they paid you for it and they didn't want you to take it. There was no Blackberry. The job I had before, I was expected to answer emails on my Blackberry on Sunday nights at 11 o'clock. And there was no needless travel. All the things that the job I had previously that made me psychosomatic, and that I had to leave in order to make this shift. It didn't have any of that. So, even though you know the culture isn't what I wanted and it wasn't my be all end all job. I got in at nine and I punched out at six and I had an hour long lunch break and they paid me what I needed and wanted and, and it was fine.

Michelle: And so because of that, because I had to leave my apartment at eight o'clock in the morning and I wouldn't come home until almost seven at night, even though I was working with creative people who need, you know, needed and wanted career transitions because that's kind of how my business started. And I was in New York City, which is probably, you can't even argue that it's like the creative capital of the world. I could not meet with people face to face. I could not get out there and do workshops or free talks. Like I, I spent 50 hours commuting and at my job and I wound up, you know, and this was back in 2008, 2009, 2010 I was in this job for almost three years before I left. I wound up having to do my marketing and stuff online. And I had a blog and I had Twitter and I had a website and I would obviously have referrals and talk to my friends and just talk to my network.

Michelle: That led to having clients that were all over the globe. And it's been super interesting because even when I left my job and I had more time and space, I still worked with my clients over the phone and now I work with them over Zoom and now I have many more

in person clients than I ever had before. But, and it surprises me when clients are I have this, this one program where we spend a whole day together putting together a client's 90 day business launch plan. And the vast majority of my clients come to New York City to do that in person. And it's surprised me so much because I'm so used to doing my work virtually. And even, I once had a client who lived in my neighborhood, probably five blocks away from me and we never met we would just do our sessions, over Zoom. And, and that's, that's what was easy for everyone. So it's interesting cause I'm not, my business is definitely location independent, but I'm very grounded to where I live and I'm not a, you know, nomadic person, that sort of thing.

Kathryn: How do you describe your job to people who are just being polite?

Michelle: I say I'm a business coach for creative women.

Kathryn: Okay. And when you're talking to somebody who's really interested?

Michelle: I say I'm a business coach for creative women who want to discover, launch, and build their dream businesses.

Kathryn: And how did you get started?

Michelle: Oh Man. You know, I think it goes back to that psychosomatic job. Where once I realized I did not want to be a performer from my profession, that was very hard for me to come to terms with. It took like years for me to take the little voice in the back of my head saying, you don't want to do this anymore for your job, for your career. You don't want to go to Idaho and be in Peter Pan for \$300. And you know, this is not what you want as a grownup. I would shoo that voice away and it got louder and louder. And finally, when I was able to look in the mirror and say, okay, this isn't what I want for myself anymore, what's going to be the next step? I would, I would joke to people that I didn't know what I wanted to be when I grew up and I was in my late twenties, and people would laugh and I'll be like, no, I'm serious. That I went to find that grownup job. And one of my big kind of day jobs as an actor was being in real estate. And then once I got sick of real estate and I did well in real estate, but I got sick of real estate and I didn't do well my second year, I went into sales and I hated sales. I hated everything that went with sales. And I said, I need to, I need to get a grown up job. I need to get a real salary. I need to get, you know, mythical things like 401k and health insurance. And, that psychosomatic job on paper look so great. It played to my communication skills and my relationship building skills. It was an account manager position. I was kind of a liaison between the clients of the business and the project manager and the internal people who were essentially building websites for colleges and like kind of private Facebook groups for colleges. It was in this trendy neighborhood in New York City. It was a knowhow and it was lots of young people and it wasn't a startup, but like, you know, it kind of had that vibe and I felt like, yes, this is going to be my place and this is what I'm looking for and this is going to be great.

Michelle: And I had a boss that was verbally abusive and just a big bully and it was a nightmare. So I think that job to me was a wake up call of, okay, this is not where you're going to stay.

You need to figure out, and I think because I came from that place of pursuing my dream as a profession for, you know, essentially 20 years, even though it didn't last that long, once I finished college, I mean it was something I was going after since I was, you know, 10 years old. It was not acceptable for me to just find a job that would be fine, would be like, okay. And I didn't, I wasn't an optimistic back then as I am now, but I didn't want a job that, I wanted to find something that I could be, if not passionate about then I could enjoy and feel valued and fulfilled by.

Michelle: And I didn't think I would find anything that came close to performing, for me, in that way. But I kind of left myself open. The first realization I made is that I was not going to be happy unless I was going to be my own boss. And that was really, a moment of, oh gosh, why am I always picking the hard thing? Acting always felt like the hard thing and now I wanted an easy thing and here was another hard thing. And then to realize that being a coach, and this was more of my mission statement back then, for creative people going through career transitions, being a coach, I needed at the time and couldn't find, really got me excited. But I call that my Oh Crap Balls Moment, because it's not, I think there is such a fallacy in society where when you find the job you're supposed to be doing or the career you're supposed to be doing in the business are supposed to be running, the angels sing and you feel like Snow White in the forest with the animals and everything is wonderful in the rose colored glasses are on all the time.

Michelle: It is not the case in the vast majority of my clients, it was not the case for me. It was more of a slow burn of like, well, this sounds ridiculous and this feels really hard. But, I guess now I'm going to be a life coach of all weird, crazy things. But, I just followed that piece of, all right, I think this is what I want to do. I think this is what's going to leave me fulfilled and I'm just gonna put one foot in front of the other and I ate that elephant one bite at a time. And that's kind of how it all started.

Kathryn: And when you first started, how did you find your clients?

Michelle: Oh, this is such a good question. I started, my very first client, actually my husband found for me, um, he at the time was in an improv class and wound up mentioning for some reason like, oh my girlfriend is just started taking her life coaching certification and one woman in the class, was like, oh, I need her, I need to work with her. And it was great, although super scary because when I went to their show at the end of the class, they always have a show and I went to the show and she sought me out when she saw me talking to him and said, oh, are you the girlfriend who's the life coach? Like I need to work with you. And I remember saying to her, okay, but I'm only a few months along and I don't think I'll break you, but I haven't worked with anyone before and is that okay?

Michelle: And she said yes. And she was like a great first client. My second client was someone who I went to NYU s um, who has one of the best voices I've ever heard in my life and I saw on Facebook that he was like working in government jobs, working a government job. And I reached out to him even though I hadn't talked to him in 10 years, since we had graduated college and said to him, Hey, I'm just curious, are you happy at work or you're looking for something else? Because I'm looking, I'm getting certified and I'm looking for clients. And I specifically want to work with creative people who want to, you

know, change careers or work on their career, happiness or whatever. I said, um, and would you be interested? And he said yes. So, so I always tell my clients at this point that I, in the 11 years, I think coaching, I had that one client find their first client because she put a website up and that client googled something and found her. Like I fully fell over.

Michelle: So at the beginning of my business I got my clients primarily through word of mouth, although I remember the first time I, and by directly approaching them. But I do remember like I got a very basic website up pretty early in the process and I would blog continuously and I took a blogging class from Holly Becker who runs a really popular website called Decor8. And she was doing a blogging class and I took it and I found myself in a sea of creative women, lots of interior designers and graphic designers and other artists. And I was like the only coach. And I wound up getting a bunch of my first clients by being very active in that class and building those relationships and continuing to write on my blog. And so that was super interesting for me too, of just going, oh, I could take a class that like my ideal clients are at, and as long as I show up in an authentic way, then I'm going to make these connections.

Michelle: So, so that was really the start of my business. And within the first probably two years, I think right before I left my job, I got a connection to Etsy and was featured. I wrote a post for Etsy and things and that was kind of like the beginning of the beginning. And that back in, you know, 2009 or 2010 whatever it was really helped elevate my visibility for sure.

Kathryn: So do you still mostly find clients through word of mouth or has it shifted?

Michelle: It's shifted. I'm definitely a heavy referral business, which I love. I love it. So the people that come to me from other people saying nice things is probably about 30% of my new clients. I probably got another 30% from Google, which is kind of amazing to me. But I guess that's what happens when you've had an active website and blog for over 10 years is that there's SEO at work, even though I didn't set out to do that. And then I got probably another 30% from podcasts like this and from like Creative Live classes. So that's, that's a really nice balance for me.

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

Michelle: Oh, I mean, you know, there is a personal piece here of being a two time breast cancer survivor. So, um, I really, not that starting my business wasn't a struggle, or all of that stuff. I mean it was, but everything pales in comparison to getting a breast cancer diagnosis when you were 33 years old. And I, I got that in November of 2011 so I went full time with my business in March of 2010 and at that point in time, my husband was actually getting ready to go freelance and I got this diagnosis and we looked at each other and we said, okay, well you're not going anywhere because the health insurance that has company provided was so good that every time we called Aetna and they would look up our account, the customer service rep, even though they were all different, would always say, you have a really good plan. And so we're like, yes we do. So, you know, figuring out how to get through my treatments, and balance my business, and figure out how to work with my clients, and show up in the way that I wanted to

continue to show up for my work and my clients, but making sure I take care of myself and I get through my treatments was really, I mean, something you can't really prepare for.

Kathryn: So many puzzle pieces.

Michelle: Yeah. So many, so many.

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

Michelle: Oh Man. I mean I think if I go back to that beginning piece, and think of that first year, so I left my job in March of 2010 and in my first calendar year I made the same base salary that I made at that finance job. And that to me it was like, oh my gosh, I could do this. Especially because it was the middle of a recession and my finance job, I felt was very safe and stable. And even though I had laid the foundation and I continue to say that baby steps build the strongest foundation, there's this piece of, I can't believe I did it. I can't believe that I replaced that income. I can't believe that I built things, and people came. It was just like that first year success of, okay, this is working. I feel like was that first success. And probably that Etsy feature, that Etsy feature also led to me being introduced to a literary agent that I signed with. And it never went anywhere. But I think like that was still so early. It must have been right after I quit my job because I don't think I was at work then, but it was, it might have been within that first year. And I remember just feeling very affirmed of what I was doing and how it was resonating. And after chasing agents as an actor for a long time and not getting very far, it was just like, oh, here's these things. These doors are opening, that I'm not even necessarily knocking on. Like that felt like, that all felt like big success for me.

Kathryn: Looking back, if you could start over and fresh today, what would you do differently?

Michelle: I would definitely have made a stronger, clearer plan for myself in order to get ready to quit my job, because it took me two years and seven months and I should like quiz my, my former clients on their, their timeline as to what it took because not to toot my own horn, but I will a little bit, if I had me back then, it would not have taken that long. And if I was more mindful of how I was going about getting my certification and then building my business and building, you know, essentially the severance I gave myself quitting, and I was more proactive, I could've made it happen sooner. So I think I would have 1000000%, made a more concrete plan than I did at the time. And you know, back in, I'm laughing because I feel sometimes like in internet business dinosaur, where my business to start, was really built on blogging and tweeting and Etsy and that it's just like, could not be the case anymore. So those are not really the things that I work with my clients on. And I think I would, I would have been more proactive with pitching various outlets, with podcasts weren't even invented, with getting on podcasts and with really honing my connections at the time and really sounding the horn, even more than I did back then.

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

Michelle: Yes, sure. Um, well I could give you yesterday. What am I thinking? Okay, so yesterday was Tuesday or you know, I'll kind of, this is how I try to plan my week and because I'm highly creative and I'm multi-passionate, I thrive on variety and I'm not one of those people that could like do a deep dive into things for a week and go and just churn it out. And it's funny because some of the clients that I work with are highly creative and multi-passionate and like that is their jam. That's how they get stuff done. And that is just not, and we all still figure out what ways work for us but that is not me at all. I'd rather kind of break up my day and work with pieces of stuff.

Michelle: But that said, I try to have kind of buckets for each day. So Monday and Tuesday are usually for client sessions. Wednesdays are usually for group calls, for my group programs that I have. Thursdays I try to do writing work, and Fridays I try to do admin. Inevitably things get mixed up. Like I'm talking to you on a on a Wednesday and I don't have any group calls today, which is exciting. It's nice to have a freer day. But I try to kind of stick to that. So for example, on Tuesday, usually when I have client sessions, I have no more than four. But they happen between 10 in the morning and two in the afternoon because I have a four and a half year old and my husband is really the primary caretaker for afterschool, and so he goes to get her at 2:30 from school.

Michelle: And I know that's my chance. We're a one car household, that's my chance to like jump in the car with him. He drops me off at the local coffee shop that is down the street from her school and then he goes and gets her. So like if I want to get out of the house, that's, that's my time. And if I, if I have sessions later in the afternoon, there was a chance, like my kid's going to come interrupt, especially in the winter because they're home a lot more. So I have my sessions from 10:00 to 2:00, and then I go to the coffee shop and I'm doing client followup and I'm doing, you know, email responses and I'm doing, like this past Tuesday I only had two clients, which was nice. So in the morning I was able to do some catch up work, on my group programs and then meet with my clients and then do some client follow up and then go to the coffee shop.

Michelle: And I have a project management system that I just live by. And what I wound up working on was a new sales page, and program name for something that I'm relaunching at the beginning to mid March. So, I spent the bulk of my coffee shop time doing that, but I also answer client emails and you know, worked on a blog post that's being written for next week. Um, that I have a content writer that does some of my writing for me. So I did stuff with her. So that was kind of like a normalish Tuesday. But things look really different depending on the, on the day. But those are kind of the, what I try to follow.

Kathryn: Earlier you mentioned that you went through a life coach training. Is that something you would recommend for people starting out in career coaching?

Michelle: Yeah. You know, yes and no. I feel like it really depends on the situation. I am very, very much someone who will get on a, on a soap box and if someone is calling themselves a coach and they're actually a consultant, then I get upset. A lot of people think that coaching is just like you tell people what to do and you're a coach and that is not in any way, shape, or form. So if there is no part of coaching that has ever been in your training or that is part of your job or that you've experienced firsthand and you think it's just

telling people what to do, then like please stop and either call yourself a consultant because that is more consulting or go get some training. I feel like whether you need to get your certification and like be part of a program for a year or more and like really dive into it is sometimes not the most necessary.

Michelle: And I think, again, it depends on everyone's kind of personal story. Like I'm working with a client right now who is going to have a business that is like part coaching, part consulting, part mentorship and she's a counselor and I feel like based on what we talked about and worked on, unless she, she wanted to take like a few coaching classes to add some tools to her toolbox, like that would be great, but I don't think she needs any more certifications. And I feel like a lot of the time it's procrastination methods for my clients, to like go to a school or a certification instead of actually doing the work. So I think if you asked me this question five years ago, I would have given a different answer. But at this point I really do feel like it's case by case. And I feel like at the end of the day, the reason that clients work with you, I don't want to say no one cares about your certification, but also kind of, no one cares about your certification.

Michelle: I mean for me I felt, I would not have felt comfortable being a coach without my certification. I just wouldn't have. But at the time I had no related qualifications and I had never even been coached by anyone. So that also blows my mind, that I never even experienced it and that probably wasn't so smart. And I felt like that gave me a leg up, just in feeling legit and valid that okay, I know what I'm doing. I've been trained in this. But no one, I had one, I've had one consultation call in 11 years where someone said like, tell me more about your certification program and what you had to do for it. I felt like no one cares and people work with you, especially in this sort of capacity, when you're working on real like personal, vulnerable, sensitive stuff with someone, they feel like you understand them and they understand you. There is resonance with what you offer and what they want to work on. They feel safe with you and they feel like you're going to deliver the results that you want. And that is way more, I feel like that those are the main things that go into that decision making process, more than anything else. So, it's kind of not a yes or no answer. That's helpful.

Kathryn: And keeping all of that in mind, do you keep up with any kind of continuing education?

Michelle: Not regularly. No. I feel like my coaching has really involved, evolved into like a coaching, consulting hybrid. And I have worked with my own business coaches very regularly over the past three, I mean I've worked at business coaches on and off since really I started and my own life coaches and spiritual coaches and all of that stuff. But I've worked with business coaches consistently over the past three to four years and I feel like the things that I work on for my own business and what I get from them and what I see is working in real time for these clients, is giving me more knowledge than anything else I could do at this point. So I haven't necessarily gotten, you know, continuing education in that way.

Kathryn: Now we're going to get into some numbers. So how long have you been doing the work and what would you say your salary ranges right now?

Michelle: Oh yeah. So, I have been coaching since early 2008 I have been doing this full time since March of 2010 and I am in the multi six figure range. So, it's interesting because my income is obviously just a piece of my overall profits and I take home about 70% of my profits, so 30% go back into the business and my expenses and I pay myself about 70% and of course part of that 70% goes to taxes and all that other stuff. So I'm not necessarily taking all of that home, but that's what, that's what things look like.

Kathryn: The lovely range in New York City taxes.

Michelle: Oh yeah. Well, and it's, we moved to New Jersey, I'm about two and a half years ago, so I'm right outside of New York. And one of the first things I did, my accountant says, so we want to move your LLC unless you want to pay taxes in both places. I'm like, no thank you. So we just moved that LLC over and not that the New Jersey taxes are that much better, but we're not. We're a little better.

Kathryn: Every little bit.

Michelle: For sure.

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

Michelle: Oh man. So you know, this is what's really hard, but, but back in, you know, 2010 before I quit my job, like January, I made like \$1,000 a month. February I made \$1,000. March, I made \$1,000. I quit in March, I feel like April, maybe I made like \$2,000. Like it was barely more than that. And then in May or June, I launched a new program and I made like \$4,000 a month. And that was pretty like my pretty consistent monthly gross profit. So that the first year I grossed \$60,000. And that to me felt huge. I feel like though, it's so hard to get any sort of range because results just really vary. And I have had clients who have knocked it out of the park and have, you know, had six figure businesses within the first, you know, twoish years of being in business. And I've had clients that like get to the end of year one and it's like, okay, maybe they're doing \$30,000 but it all depends on everyone's situation and how much they're able to show up and what they're putting into it. And you know, how good their marketing is, how good their elevator pitch is and how vulnerable they are getting and how much they're showing up for their business and putting themselves out there. Um, so I feel like, you know, that \$60,000 gross is like doable if you're doing the right work and getting the right help and support, and guidance. Um, but it could really, it could really vary from there.

Kathryn: And I have a feeling the answer, tm this next question is going to be very, very similar. Where does it top out?

Michelle: Oh Man, I don't even want to say. Like, I feel like it's one of those and I kind of, I'm rolling my eyes at this own answer, but like there's not a ceiling to this work. There's not a ceiling to this, this space. I mean for me, when I go into my accountant and I hit that six figure gross after five years doing this full time, and again, it had the, I had the boob cancer and the middle and, and it took me a while and then I got it again.

Michelle: But in the last two years by my business has really grown and to be able to go in the accountant and say, oh, okay, well here's what I made this year and she'll say, okay, well is that what you expect to make next year? And I said, no, I'm expecting this number. To even have the number come out of my mouth is something that I had never even dreamed was possible. And I remember looking at my husband, you know, on the way home from that appointment and saying, oh my God, could you believe this number? And he's always being supportive, he's like, yes, yes, I can, and you've been working for this for 10 years, and like, this is what happens. And then I could finally see in real terms how this business could be a half million dollar business, how this business could be \$1 million business or more.

Michelle: And now I'm, I'm left with that question of, do I want my business to get that big as that's something I want to work on and manage is that, you know, how, and if, so, how would I want to put things in place so that my business continues to work for me and the lifestyle that me and my family want? So I think there definitely is possibility of, you know, if you get really good at what you do and you keep putting yourself out there, and you have the right resonant messaging and you really find a problem to solve, then there's not a limit to what you can make and bring in.

Kathryn: And when you're developing your programs and offers, how do you decide what to charge?

Michelle: You know, for me, I started, I remember when I first put up my website and I was still getting my certification. And I needed like one external client and I found someone who just like his wife read my blog or something, I don't know where he found my blog. And I charged \$25 a session cause I wanted the client to have skin in the game, but I was still learning and I wanted to charge something and, and we met for 12 weekly sessions. So I think I got, I'm bad at math, but I think I got like \$300, something like that. Yeah, \$300. And then once I got my certification and I had those credentials, I said, okay, I'm going to now charge \$75 a session. And I really thought at that point that I was going to work with a lot of actors who wanted to leave the business and find something else that they could be passionate about in a, in a grownup, in a quote unquote grownup way.

Michelle: So for me, back when I was an actor, I always found \$75 from my voice lesson. I think it was like every week or every other week I would \$75 for my voice lesson. So that to me was just, okay, well if I found that money, someone else who this is going to be important for them is going to find that money. So I charged \$75 and once, I always tell my clients, once you get to the point where either you're on a wait list or you, you're getting more and more social proof, I always feel like the more testimonials you have, the more experience you have, the more really solid positive results you're getting for your clients. The more sales you have, the more experience you have, that's when you raise it, raise it, raise it. I also feel like in a service based business, when I put out an Ebook or a group program that's at a lower price point, I could raise my one-on-one prices because I'm serving the people who couldn't afford it, afford working with me in this way, in a different way.

Michelle: And therefore my one-on-one prices are gonna go up, because it wouldn't make sense to have a group program that's priced the same as one on one. So there's really this kind

of art I feel like, I mean when you have a product, you have to obviously keep in mind like you have to recoup all the material costs. And you have to kind of assign a number on like your experience. And we also have to remember that people buy results and they buy the value of what you're offering, not necessarily like your hourly rate or what it costs for you to do something. And so I think that's always something that keep in mind. So like for me, I mean I started in 2008 at \$25 a session and now if you want to work with me one on one for, you know, a 75 minute session, it's \$1,500.

Michelle: So there's this piece where like that was my trajectory over a, you know, 10, 11 year period. But you know, you have to find that, that piece within yourself of where your experience is now and who you want to work with. And what, I feel like the hourly piece is kind of always the best place to start, but you don't want to communicate that to the prospective client. You don't want to say, you know, my work is \$50 an hour. You want to wrap it up in a package. And I have clients that start on the lower side because they're brand new to what they're offering. And I have clients who started on the higher side because they have the education or they have the professional experience or they're working with people who would see a low number and go, oh, that's not valuable. Did that answer your question? That was kind of all over the place I think.

Kathryn: I think that's in part because pricing is all over the place.

Michelle: Yes! Thank you for understanding.

Kathryn: So what would you say your number one tip for women looking to get started as a career coach is?

Michelle: My number one tip is always go do the work, please just go do the work. Go find someone, find one Guinea pig or find two Guinea pigs. I always start very small. So like I wouldn't say go find one Guinea pig unless you really know you want to work with someone on a longer term change or you really want to work someone on a longer term piece, go find someone that you could say, can we sit down for 90 minutes? I'm offering a 90 minute session for \$50, because you always need to charge something so that it feels real to you and that it gives that person skin in the game and gives value to what you're doing.

Michelle: Um, and say I want to talk with people who are going through a career change and we could use these 90 minutes to look over your resume or brush up your linkedin profile or help you get more clarity on what it is you're looking for or figure out what you need to do to talk to your boss about the thing you want, whatever you want to work with a client on. Give them those options and say, I'm looking for someone to do this next week who's in and just get the clients and do the work and take a lot of notes, a lot of notes. And with each client figure out, okay, what about that worked? What about that didn't, what worked for me, what worked for them, what didn't work for me, what didn't work for them? Because, really what we're looking for is that like overlap of what your prospective client or customer needs and wants and what you like and enjoy doing.

Michelle: And that's, that's what we're looking for. So I would suggest just doing work and then deciding do I need some sort of coaching program or a certification? Do I, like what needs to happen next? And then I always want someone to just get an online presence up, make a basic website so that it can do the heavy lifting for you and could be a place that you're proud to send people. And then just talk yourself up, talk yourself up and ask those Guinea pig clients if they had good results. Ask them for a little testimonial blurb, put it on that website and, and just put yourself out there. Like it could be that easy even though I know it's so much easier said than done. It doesn't need to be any more complicated than that.

Kathryn: And what are your next steps?

Michelle: Ooh, I'm excited for my next steps. I'm reworking things a lot over here. So I just launched and just started my first year long program called Dream to Done where, where I'm working now with about 10 women who are discovering, launching and then building their dream businesses with me over the course of a year. So that started in January and that started actually in February and goes through the end of the year. So that to me is super exciting. My clients there are amazing. I'm continuing my 90 Day Business Launch program that I mentioned before, and I also have a mastermind group that I run twice a year, six month mastermind group called Build Your Client Base that I'm keeping up with cause the women there are amazing, the results are amazing. And that just keeps getting filled up. Um, but I have a program called Discover Your Dream Business that I've been running for a few years and I'm reworking it behind the scenes to make it an on demand course so that you could start it anytime, but there's still alive component where, where there's group calls, live group calls with me while you're going through the program and it's going to be at a lower price point than it's ever been before.

Michelle: So that is going to start sometime in April. I'm not exactly sure when, but pretty soon. I'm gonna, I'm gonna launch it to the world and if anyone's interested in that, they could head to when I grew up, coach.com/discover get on that list. And when you'd get on the list, you'll not only be notified when it's open and the special pricing I'll have for it when it just launches. But there's also a, you know, 10 Days to Discover your Dream Business email sequence that will help you start figuring things out right away. So I feel like that's, that's what my, what I'm set on right now and what's coming up for, for me in the business.

Kathryn: Where all can listeners find you?

Michelle: Yes, whenigrowupcoach.com is the place to go. And then from there you could follow my buttons, to Facebook and Instagram and LinkedIn or whatever I have there, but the social media platform I'm most active on is Instagram. And then I also have a private Facebook group, that if you sign up for any of my opt-ins. And I have one, if you're interested in launching, you could go to whenigrowupcoach.com/launch. If you're interested in building your client base or boosting your business, you could go to whenigrowupcoach.com/build. If you sign up for any of those, you'll get the link to my private Facebook group and I post there, every week day. And there's over a thousand creative women in there that are looking to discover, launch, and build their dream

businesses. And it's a really fun, supportive community. So that's like the social media place, that those are the social media places that I'm at most often.

Kathryn: Michelle, thank you so much for joining us. This has been great.

Michelle: Oh, thank you. Kathryn I was, I was thrilled to be here. I'm still thrilled to be here. Thanks again for having me.

Kathryn: Thank you for listening to Compass. You'll find today's show notes at compasspod.com/010. If you enjoyed this show, please share it with a friend, by visiting compasspod.com/010 and clicking the share buttons at the top of the page. Next week we'll be talking to Margaret Tra, music publicist.