

Kathryn: Welcome to episode 18 of Compass, I'm your host Kathryn Hunter. Do you need time for your creativity to develop? Today Amanda Baye and I talk about that and more when we get into the details of becoming a branding strategist. Amanda, welcome to the show.

Amanda: Thanks Kathryn. Happy to be here.

Kathryn: 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?

Amanda: I think like any five year old, you know, you were so scattered, you had ideas and it would change every day. I was thinking about this and you know what, it ranged from being an astronaut to a teacher, to a marine biologist. I think exploration seemed to be a common theme when, when I was younger for sure.

Kathryn: And how had that changed by the time you left high school?

Amanda: Wow. Well, I kind of gave up on my dreams of being an astronaut, but, interestingly enough marine biology stuck through, um, despite excelling in a lot of my art classes and one of my art teachers really interestingly enough, back then, pushing me towards getting into graphic design. But of course, no, I was a bit stubborn and, yeah, I wanted to pursue the path of marine biology.

Kathryn: Did you go into college with that as your major?

Amanda: Well, I went into university my first year and with, with my sights set on marine biology and, as it turned out, I just, I took a whole bunch of -ologies my first year, just a random collection of topics ending in -ology. So from astronomy to biology to psychology and you know, just your general first year studies. Right?

Kathryn: Did you graduate in marine biology how did that, how did that flow?

Amanda: Well, after my first year I decided I was actually really frustrated with the university. Possibly because um, I just didn't harness, I wanted to keep the doors open and options open, right. Was I totally sold on doing marine biology? No, not really. Um, so yeah, I wanted to keep the options open, but maybe that was my own downfall of doing that. Because after my first year I felt really frustrated and realizing, wow, I'm spending all of this money and I'm not super, you know, clear on exactly what I want to do. So after my first year I ended up dropping out and started traveling.

Kathryn: Was there anything from your time at university that you use now?

Amanda: Well, interestingly enough, I've gone slightly full circle because after I dropped out and traveled for, you know, on and off for about 10 years, I realized, you know what, maybe it is, I need to focus. So I actually went back to university and studied public relations and communications and part of my PR comms degree highly, was highly focused and targeted on visual communications as well. So all of those skills, um, whether that was

the design communication, the verbal, the strategic part of it is everything that I use today.

Kathryn: Tell me about your first foray into being location independent.

Amanda: Well, you know, I think, I think times have really shifted and not to give away, you know, who cares if you want to know my age, just ask. But this was pre-internet and I would say the first foray not necessarily using the term location independent, but what became a perfect suitcase or a backpack profession was teaching English as a second language. And that was more or less, one of the things that, I had, you know, used in my life as I was working and it enabled me to go and travel and live in different places while, having having my profession. So, you know, being in, in Japan for two and a half years, or Colombia... Korea for example.

Amanda: So really, you know, that was the location independence. I didn't have to be in an office, but I could jump around from, from country to country school to school and still, you know, have work and the travel experience at the same time. So I know that doesn't necessarily answer the location independence, as we think of it in today's world. But I would probably say when I realized that, you know, after being an ESL teacher and traveling around that I was actually able, once I graduated from PR and communications, this was in 2004, I was doing freelance work and I realized that besides being connected to a phone and my computer, I was able to do this anywhere. And that's, that's when things started clicking with me.

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

Amanda: You know what, just keep it simple, right? It's, I will just say I do branding and graphic design. That's what people understand. And, it's, yeah. If they don't want, if they want to take the conversation further, fantastic. But just give them the gist, right?

Kathryn: And when they do want to take the conversation further?

Amanda: You know what it goes into questions or it goes into analogies, you know, I'll find out about them and what they do and use my title to, explain or bring it to life in their world. So for example, they're like, yeah, I'm a, I'm a business owner. It's like fantastic. You know, I do a lot of branding and graphic design, keep it simple. But for example, you know, I'll go through the strategic process with you and, you know, ask them different questions and their business to relate it back.

Kathryn: And how did you get started in branding?

Amanda: How did I get started? You know what, in let's see, two, I'm not even going to give a year on this, but a couple of years ago, um, like I said, I was freelancing from 2004 on, but a couple of years ago I realized it's like, you know what, this having the background with the visual communications, but the strategic elements as well, looking at the communication pieces, um, I realized that all of these skills weave together and it's

something that I really want to focus on. And so I'd probably say in the past couple of years that's, that's been my main focus.

Kathryn: How did you find your first clients?

Amanda: First clients? Um, referrals, referrals would be the main one. So having, um, let's see, a couple of previous clients that I was doing freelance work, I reached out to them going, hey, this is what I'm doing. This is where I'm heading. If you know anyone that could use help in this area, you know, I'd love if you could connect me. And then that's when the referrals came in. And then of course, you know, referrals are, um, kind of like a waterfall, right? Where it's like once the trickle starts, um, it keeps going. Uh, as well. I do a lot of lead generation and, and finding clients through different Facebook platforms. Online platforms. Yeah.

Kathryn: Is that how you primarily find clients now? Those two?

Amanda: I do and I think my current, excuse me, my current location is I'm in Mexico and so it's not like I can go to a lot of networking meetings like or networking events or different meetings or conferences. It's just not necessarily here in this area. And for the Mexican businesses that are here, they don't necessarily want to pay US prices.

Kathryn: Tell us about your first major struggle.

Amanda: You know what? I think a lot of that struggle is for example, keeping the generations, the lead generations going, keeping, keeping that active. And like I said, you know, living in Mexico, it does limit me. You know, if I were to, for example, be living in let's say New York, right? It would be so much easier to go to networking events, to go to meetup groups, to find conferences, to do speaking engagements at, you know, small, small network or meet up groups. Um, and that would be a really great lead generation source. So that's, that's definitely one of the challenges. And I think the second challenge is really having a consistent and stable income. I think a lot of people who work in a corporation have a job. Um, that's one of the things that, you know, x number of dollars are coming in each month.

Kathryn: How do you handle that variability?

Amanda: I have a baseline and that's what I need, for example, to cover, you know, what I need to cover. And every month it's like, that's, that's my, my target obviously. And then I have, you know, a secondary target, right? So it's just putting it into kind of steps on the ladder. What helps here is I do work part time at an ecological center, actually doing their communication. So that helps. So while I'm balancing, you know, my own freelance business, I do have an income from a job. So I know that that's going to meet my living expenses and then anything else is above and beyond that. So it's like still the one foot in one world, one foot in the other.

Kathryn: Tell me about your first major success.

Amanda: First major success. Oy. You know what? I think it just, it came down to getting one of my first larger paying clients. I think for me that was like, wow, okay, this is great. I know, um, I'd been doing smaller projects, one offs, you know, a lot of graphic design stuff where it's like, I need, you know, it looks kind of like a gun for hire, right? I need a brochure, I need some business cards, I need this. And when I really started honing things in like, no, it needs to be like a complete branding package. And started getting the clients for that. For me, that was like, yes, okay, this, this is the direction I've been wanting to go. I, I'm doing it. And, and that was, the moment to celebrate, you know.

Kathryn: If you could start fresh today, would you do anything differently?

Amanda: You know what, that's a really great question. Hmm. If I could start fresh today, would I do anything differently? Honestly, I mean, of course there's, there's lots of different things you can do in different orders. Um, you know, switch things up, have have the foundation of your business first. But I think logistically I did it in a way that has worked for me. Um, the decisions and the process and the things that I've done, the order I've done it in, I don't have any regrets with that. I don't look back at it going, oh crap, I really should have, you know, changed this or done this.

Amanda: So, no, I mean, it worked. Everything has worked for me and I think it just depends on, you know, for example, your listeners, what, what stage that they are in. I think something that really helped me was being in the corporate world, not jumping out immediately, having my escape plan, and starting to build my foundation of my business. Right. As a freelance. And so once the, the scale if you will, the payscale started being to a point of like, okay, I can, I can do this. There is a possibility. I've got clients, I've got my lead generation in place. Then it was like, yeah, okay, it's time to bail.

Kathryn: Odds are, you don't really have a typical day. Do you want to give us what a random day looks like?

Amanda: I get up really early in the morning. So this morning I was up at five o'clock in the morning. I find I'm most productive in the morning. So, um, I bang off a lot of my work, my client work and you know, emails and things like that first thing in the morning. I tend to use my, let's say nine to noon as other work. Not necessarily the creative work. And then in the afternoons it really depends. Some days I'll just, you know, go grab a book, go to the beach, go for a walk. I do have a dog, so, and he has a, a daycare with a swimming pool. So we'll go to the swimming pool some days or some days, just, you know, grab a cocktail, grab a beer with a friend. It really depends, but my afternoons are a lot more flexible and I front load my my days with, with the work and then the afternoons with more play and I find being in a creative profession you need to have that space, for yourself and for the inspiration.

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

Amanda: You know, what? Yeah, and I, I fully, fully, fully endorse this, um, something that I belong to Skillshare. There's lots of fun courses and online things going on. Um, I've also invested in a business coach this year and that has really helped me push the needle

forward and get super clear on where I'm going, in the direction I'm going. Yeah. So highly recommended and encouraged that. And I also think too, you know, attending conferences and networking with your peers and clients. That also gives you a sense of, lets you keep a pulse on what's happening in your industry.

Kathryn: And now we're going to get into the numbers. What would you say your salary range is and how long have you been doing the work?

Amanda: My current salary range? Yeah, it, it ranges. But, uh, some my lowest months have been about \$1200 US. Um, my highest months, \$5,000 US.

Kathryn: And how long have you been doing this?

Amanda: Consistently, for about two years now.

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

Amanda: Oh, the very beginning... There were some months where it was just a couple of hundred dollars. That's it, and so that's when, you know, of course I still had my foot in the two worlds of corporate world and doing freelance, so it wasn't a full focus, but at the same time, you know, that's, that's the reality is, uh, you're not going to be jumping out of the gates and making six figures.

Kathryn: How long was your transition period?

Amanda: Uh, about four months when I realized it's like, yeah, I need, I want out, I need out. And then that was the developing the game plan. And, and yeah, getting that ready to go.

Kathryn: Where would you say the salary range kind of tops out?

Amanda: Oy, you know what, there are people and it depends on who your clients are, who your clients are and who you are working with. I mean there's different, solopreneurs or small agencies that are working with bigger companies who are, are making six figures easily. So it really depends on who you are targeting and you're the model of your business, right? So I'm working by myself. I have yet to contract out people. Maybe that's something in the future, but if you do have an agency model where you do have several people working with you, obviously you can bring in more people, more clients, and are able to target some of the bigger fish.

Kathryn: How do you decide what you charge?

Amanda: You know what? I used to do it on an hourly rate and I think that was under serving myself and the value that I bring. So I really got rid of the hourly model and I set everything by packages. Of course I take into consideration when I've designed those packages, or those set rates it really, how much time, how much actual physical time that I'm, you know, for example, creating, drafting, designing, corresponding, doing presentations, doing feedback, getting on the phone. So all of those extra details

besides the creation. So I have kind of a rough estimate of what, what that looks like for time. Um, and that is built, excuse me. And that is built into the, my overall pricing.

Kathryn: What's your number one tip for women looking to get into branding.

Amanda: To get into branding, I think understanding that it is competitive, there's a lot of people out there doing it. So it would be really finding your niche and your skills and marketing that to set yourself apart.

Kathryn: What are your next steps?

Amanda: My next steps? I think right now the plan is, for example, personally, um, I do want to take off for a couple of months, um, not take off from my business, but really be location independent. So if I do want to this summer, go into the mountains in Mexico or go somewhere else. Oddly, Portugal has been calling me. Um, so that's, that's one goal that I have. The next one is just continuously expanding and really aiming for the clients who want more of the specific full branding package or you know, what I call Branding with a big B versus branding with a little b, right.

Kathryn: And where can listeners find you?

Amanda: My email, first of all, my website. So it is boostcreative.co CO, right? Uh, they can head over there as well. They can email me if they want to touch base at amanda@boostcreative.co and on Instagram it would be /amandabaye, BAYE and on Facebook it would be boostcreative.co as well.

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

Amanda: Thank you. Kathryn has been a pleasure. Pleasure to be here.

Kathryn: If you want your own location independent life and are eager to take that next step, join us in compass insiders where every week I send you actionable tips, inspiration, and motivation so you can take that next step towards going remote. Join us now at compasspod.com/insiders, that's compasspod.com/insiders. Did you enjoy this episode of Compass? If so, please take a moment to write a review. Leaving a review helps other women find us so they can find their direction too. Thank you for listening to Compass. You can find today's show notes at compasspod.com/018, that's compasspod.com/018. Next week we'll be talking with Cori Carl, managing director.