

Kathryn: Welcome to episode 28 of Compass, I'm your host Kathryn Hunter. Are you wanting to start a new career but are unsure about how to begin? Today Casey Marriott and I talk about the starting fresh as a digital marketer. You're listening to Compass, where we talk with location independent womxn about their work and the paths that got them there. We get into their stories of struggle and success, finding clients, figuring out what to charge, and of course, we talk money. Join us and take the next step in finding your direction. Casey, welcome to the show.

Casey: Thanks for having me, Kathryn.

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

Casey: To be honest, I actually have no memory of what I wanted to be. I grew up in like a very artistic household. So even this whole concept of like "what would your career be when you grow up" wasn't heavily pushed. So, I think probably I, if I recall correctly, doing something artistic or creative was kind of like the general theme of things I wanted to do. Art or music or you know, like every other girl, kid's dream to be like an actress or something like that. So, certainly nothing that kind of influenced where I am today except for perhaps without having this kind of like direct career path, it allowed me to kind of focus on a more nonconventional path, I think.

Kathryn: When you were about to graduate high school, had that changed at all?

Casey: It had changed a little bit. Mostly because you're forced to think about what you want to do. You know, much like my personality is very split between creative and technical, the two courses I applied for, one was to do biomedical science and the other one wants to be a graphic artist. So you know, like I was always torn between these kind of like structure and freedom in my work. So you know, like I think realistically I wanted to be probably more so, a graphic artist but just didn't have the art skills. So I thought, okay, I'll try and do something scientific.

Kathryn: Is there anything from those studies that you use today?

Casey: So I took a gap year. Like I applied to college to do biomedical science and I took a gap year because I was determined to travel during that year. I did like, a two month trip around Europe by myself. I explored many countries, you know, went around with a backpack and I just honestly loved it so much. I almost didn't come home, but I thought, no, you know, like we're constantly told to, you know, "you have to go study when you leave high school" and "get into this path" and stuff like that. So I was like, no, I need to go back. And uh, so I did go back and I just wanted to be back overseas. So I think it was about in less than six months, I had made the decision to move to London and then I was like, because I'm an Australian citizen, so we have this deal with the UK that we can go for two years. So I was like, okay, I'm going to go enjoy my youth and just for two years and then I will come back to college.

Casey: So the interesting thing was that I just loved that life so much that I just kept extending it and extending it. And after London I moved to Istanbul and you know, six years later I still hadn't studied. But like, while I was in Istanbul, I kind of started toying around with freelance writing and things like that. And I kind of finally found that groove that was between technical and creative. And it was at that point, I realized that you really do need to study to go ahead and like whichever path you eventually choose. So at that point I started an online career with, sorry, an online degree with an Australian university. And then I spent the next three or four years studying while I was living in Istanbul and then later in Spain. So I ended up studying journalism, which as a digital marketer heavily plays into, you know, like writing and, and things like that.

Casey: So how I became location independent was, yeah. So I was in Istanbul and I tried a few different office jobs and, you know, played around with many different careers, but nothing really stuck. You know, I hated being inside the office. I hated like being, being stuck inside when maybe there was like a beautiful sunny day and I just didn't have that freedom to like maybe go work outside for a couple of hours. So progressively, like I started finding like a more kind of freedom jobs. So, you know, like starting from our office, going to like teaching then, you know, just doing like a couple of private classes here and there for teaching English. And then eventually I started writing for Timeout Istanbul as a freelance writer. And I just loved the freedom, you know, like working from any place that I wanted. I really realize that I just, I wanted to kind of start working for myself.

Casey: So that was like the start into becoming location independent. But still at that time I was like supporting myself with other like small jobs that I, that weren't location independent. Then after that, uh, I met my future husband who was Spanish and we decided to move to Spain. And the, all of a sudden I found myself in a country where, you know, I didn't speak the language and it was in the middle of the global financial crisis, so I really didn't have a choice to get a job in Spain at that time. It was almost impossible. Even though, you know, I wrote to all the newspapers and tried really hard to get into journalism but it just wasn't happening. So I started looking online, kind of out of desperation and ended up finding a job as an editor in chief for like an expat website that was in 11 countries.

Casey: And I got the job I was from about that point on that I realized that actually, you know, you could, you can really work anywhere in the world as long as someone is willing to support having remote workers. And from then on, I haven't worked in an office and that was about 10 years ago.

Kathryn: How do you describe your work to people who are just being polite when they ask?

Casey: I actually just say I work from home. That's something that they seem to, to just kind of associate with. Usually I say like, you know, like I'm a journalist or I do digital marketing or I work online. And then if they don't understand that, I just say I work from home and they're like, "oh, I want to work from home." And that part we can connect on.

Kathryn: And when you're talking to someone who wants to know more?

Casey: As I said, like I do digital marketing over the years, I've caught with like every kind of possible aspect of digital marketing; writing, web management, and then now I'm like specified in the current client I do. I do optimization. So basically how I describe it is that, you know, I try to put businesses in the first top three positions on a front, you know, on the first page of a Google search to try and boost their business. If I go into details then, you know, I say that I do a lot of kind of like research on keywords. I find ways that we can, you know, different words that match their business that they have a chance of ranking for and you know, kind of build up their leads. I also do like a lot of webpage reformations to kind of fix flaws in their page design. Also their content. Yeah. I think the main point that I say is a, basically trying to get businesses to come up in the top search.

Kathryn: How did you get started in digital marketing?

Casey: I started by studying journalism and I wrote as a freelance writer for perhaps five or six years, but as, as a location independent worker, you know, obviously the world was online and traditional print is kind of becoming a thing of the past. And as much as that, I like loved writing for magazines and newspapers every time like I would find a new job or something like that, you know, they were always making cuts, always making cuts. So, you know, I was kind of like forced into the online world, but I realized that it actually matches much better with you know, being independent and as a natural progression of, in the online world, it really comes down to SEO and optimization. You can write as much as you want to your heart's content, but unless you're getting on the first page, no one's gonna see it.

Casey: Or unless you are doing very targeted marketing campaigns, no one's gonna see it. So, you know, I guess that, uh, what really kind of drove me more into marketing and away from like a traditional writing and journalism was that kind of excitement of coverage, you know. Finding ways to like boost your audience, reaching more people and as a writer, that actually is a really exciting thing. And I think the other reason is that as, as an independent worker, it's very hard to get a good income and there's always money in marketing because it's a, it's a direct like cause and effect. You say, I did this and it made this much money and it's much easy to get a proper wage. So all of these things have kind of slowly pushed me into like online and optimization specifically.

Kathryn: How did you find your first clients?

Casey: I was completely new to working online while I was in Spain. I just started with typing, you know, like "websites for remote workers" and things like that. And obviously, you know, the most common ones come up like Upwork and Fiverr and things like that. You know, these, the very prominent websites for remote workers. But you know, there's just so much competition and it really drives the price down. So I've really was struggling to find decent work. I tried like a couple of jobs there, short term contract work, but we're talking about, you know, people paying like \$7 an article or 1 cent per word. And it wasn't working for me. You know, like I'm a, now I'm 35. I started when I was about 26 so I was already in that point where like I needed to be earning a decent wage. So I started using, I found People per Hour, had like a slightly kind of higher paying jobs and they were like a bit more specified.

Casey: And that's where I found my first job in the Netherlands with this expat website. And then since then I've continually kind of like narrowed it down. And also the industry has changed that now there are very specific remote freelance work webpages for people of like a higher skill or if you're looking for more management positions or consultancy. Now I use those more. To be honest, like I've never found, just worked with one specifically other than People per Hour. Now there's just so many new ones. Every time I like, you know, look for a new job that I'm constantly changing. I think that today it's just by typing "freelance remote work" or you know, "independent work," you get like a really good collection of websites. Also like just recently, you know, like I've been advised to use ones like Pagan, which is a new one. There's one called like Dynamite Jobs. So yeah, the I as I said, like I haven't used them, but increasingly I'm seeing that there's like very tailored websites now for remote workers. If you're looking for that kind of higher caliber job.

Kathryn: Tell us about your first major struggle.

Casey: I think my first struggle was, it happened in my first job, is this kind of like tension between in office workers and out of office workers. You know, like I think there's no excuse for the two teams not to work closely together, but for someone to kind of get their head around that concept that I found really hard. So, you know, sometimes people would go ahead and say, for example, when I was the editor in chief, all decisions have to come through me of anything that was published on the website. And sometimes people would just like go ahead and do things and then you know, we would have to backtrack because there was a big mistake and I would ask them, why didn't you just ask me, I am on Skype or zoom or slack. I'm on there from 9:00 to 6:00, you can write to me and I will respond in two seconds. And they're like, "oh, but you weren't here.

Casey: Oh you're not in the office." You know, and this whole kind of concept of like, oh well you weren't here, I didn't contact you. And it's like, that was like a big kind of like struggle and it took me a long time. I am on my computer all day. You can contact me any time. It's the exactly the same as if I was in the office. I think that the mentality still has a long way to modernize to accept that a remote worker is perhaps equal, as in contact as someone in the office. The other struggle as well is finding like offices who are willing to really support that. It requires that when they have their staff meeting that they put on a camera so that the out of office people can tune in and it's all of these things that really, we would say a very easy but because of the traditional mentality, many times you get left out of things, you're not invited to the staff meeting. Certainly I think that having a team and an office mentality that kind of like accepts remote workers as equal as an in office worker is very important for making your job easier and also not making the work situation so isolating.

Kathryn: If someone's having that issue. Is there anything you can suggest to help them, you know, talk to management and get things in a better position?

Casey: That's an interesting question. I tried to lead by example. I would try and be like in extra contact and writing to people more and things like that so that when the time came I could say, "hey, look, why didn't you, you know, include me in this or include me on

that. I'm like, totally in contact all the time." I found that that was a better way than just kind of like going straight to management and being like, "you know, why aren't you doing this and why aren't you doing that?" Like that never really worked. I always tried to lead by example first, try and be very open. Even if sometimes they might set a meeting that's in a really great time for them, but not in a great time for me. I, you know, I make the effort, I'll be like, "no problem, of course I can have a meeting at, you know, 8:00 PM or 12:00 AM at night", just make myself available as opposed to actual steps that you can take.

Casey: I found that to be much more difficult because you can ask for things and demand things or try and make things a little bit different. But that that's uh, that has been a much harder path. I found. I think that the other way that I've tried to get around this is finding teams, as well, that already set up for this that have perhaps a 50, 50 out of office-in office team. Uh, and I find that the environment is already conducive to being more open to remote workers. And in those situations certainly it's much easy to suggest things or that we have more online meetings together or even do like some activities together that you can get to know each other.

Kathryn: How about your first major success?

Casey: I would say. My husband and I started a business in Mexico, called parotas.com. We make modern wooden furniture. So he does all like the business side, and this was like one of the first and I did all the website and optimization and I think this was one of the first times I was kind of like had free reign to do what I wanted and how I wanted. And that was like very nerve wracking because normally I've worked with already big clients. So, you know, they already have huge streams of traffic or huge budgets and it's just about making it better. So this was kind of like starting from scratch and seeing if I could get good results. When I started working with our website, I think it had been live for just one year, so it's much harder to optimize and get traffic on newer websites than older websites.

Casey: But it had maybe like a monthly traffic stream of about a thousand people per month. As this was kind of done in my spare time, I wanted to like, kind of do the most efficient marketing strategy and web development. So you know, I built out maybe 12 pages on the website and I wrote maybe 12 to 15 articles and in one year now we get about 40,000 visitors a month. So you know, that was a proud moment for me to know that actually studying with the new website, I could turn around traffic to a ridiculous amount with very, very restricted resources. That was with no marketing budget. Like we, we didn't spend any money on ad, advertising that was purely SEO.

Casey: So like search engine optimization, putting keywords on the page, writing articles that were like very specific to certain topics following from that success. That's kind of given me a boost of perhaps starting that as its own industry. I could potentially build out many different webpages and rank them, get traffic and then sell them. Or You can rent up pages. So now I'm currently in that process. I just started another website called mexlocal.com it's still very new and it's very focused on travel and Mexico, but I hope to do the same thing once I bring in traffic, try and like use it to, you know, try to monetize it by selling Mexican products or you know, doing affiliate links and things like that. So

this is kind of like a new avenue for me to try and do my own thing. But I'm very excited by that to not only be location independent but to also be boss independent. I guess, you know, start working purely for myself.

Kathryn: If you could start fresh today, knowing everything you already know, is there anything you would've done differently?

Casey: I think certainly studying is very important. Education is very important. It just kind of like fast tracks you through this whole process. Of course, you know, like I didn't know that I wanted to do this when I left high school, but I think that if I did that I would probably be five years ahead of where I am now. Continued education is very important, especially if you're working in the online world and if you are working for yourself because you know these things are changing so much and you have to constantly stay ahead of the game. I'm constantly doing like little digital marketing courses, seminars, webinars, all online. Also location independent, and you know, these kinds of things just help you keep ahead of the general information, because if you want to get, you know, the better wages and stuff like that, you really need to be the best at your game. So I think that yeah, kind of like studying earlier, getting more education early up that just like you jumped through so many hoops already and you just get to where you need to be faster.

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

Casey: I guess in that respect I'm a little bit different to other independent workers in that I normally have full time jobs. So, my typical day is actually as typical as any office I get up. Although the beautiful thing is that I don't need an alarm. I don't have to be like running, you know, to get somewhere. It just takes me five minutes to get to my office. So that, that's one great thing. I wake up when I wake up, I do a little bit of sport in the morning because, one thing I found is that removing the daily commute actually removes a lot of your daily movement. So exercise is vital as a remote worker. So I do some exercise and then, I try to always be very consistent and start my day by nine o'clock. One thing that I found has been the best for being successful as a remote worker is having a structured day. Otherwise you can easily end up working till 10 or 11 o'clock because you don't get your goals done for that day. Start by nine o'clock, have my coffee. I have, for example, in Mexico there's a little Whatsapp group of all remote workers and every now and then we'll text each other when we'll go to like a co, a coworking space and work together for a few hours.

Casey: Or I have some other friends who are also remote workers and maybe we go and meet in a cafe and just work together for a few hours. Otherwise, I'm at home. I have a home office. I invested a lot to have a good home office because again, that's also really important, like a proper office chair, things like that, so I concentrate. The good thing is, you know, every now and then I'll get up and uh, you know, do a little thing. You can do things around the house. You can, water the garden, you can go sit on the terrace for 10 minutes, you know, things like that. Then, you know, I'll have a good lunch. I'll have a nice siesta, which I adopted from Spanish culture. Then I will work till about like five or six o'clock and then I'll switch actually to personal projects. So I always do like my paid

projects during the day. And then at nighttime I try and work on my personal projects, like my own website, my business website with my partner and things like that. So in that respect, I'm put maybe a little bit different from other location independent workers in, in that I have quite a structured regular day.

Kathryn: What are you excited about right now in digital marketing?

Casey: I think that, um, you know, it's, it's, it's a very fast industry. There's so many different aspects inside of it, that each time that I'm looking for a new job, I might not be able to find a job in, you know, the specific stream that I was working before. But it's very adaptable. So, you know, like it's a, I love the variety and the future of what I can do is very exciting. So, as I said, you know, I was a journalist and I was the editor in chief and now I'm a digital marketer, SEO consultant, so next I want to try and go even more into like different aspects of marketing and also like optimization. As I just said before, like if I wanted, I can even like expand that and do my own websites. I just find increasingly, you know, traditional marketing and traditional media is moving online, that there's a lot of opportunity as someone who likes a lot of variety in the day to day, you know, that's why I didn't like being an office. It's why I didn't like being stuck in very traditional structured jobs in that sense. For me this is, it's very exciting. You know, this kind of adaptability and a way to reinvent yourself every few years and re, reinvent your complete job title. That's what I love about it.

Kathryn: Now it's time to get into the numbers. What's your income range and how long have you been doing the work?

Casey: I would say that like I still don't get the income that I like. I'm at, at about maybe like \$60,000 a year at the moment. And I did accept a slightly lower wage this time because, as an SEO consultant or digital marketer, you can say that I've just been doing this for two years. On a bigger scale, obviously my whole kind of career and writing and being the editor in chief, that all kind of encompassed digital marketing, but it wasn't specific. So you know, I've been doing that for you know, 10 to 15 years. Uh, but just specifically digital marketing only for the last two years. Now compared to what you can get in the states like double or triple. But one thing that I've found very difficult about working as an independent worker is that many people come to your, because they're trying to avoid those kind of high prices. So I'm hoping that, uh, with more experience in this specific field that each year I can try and like boost it up into line, on, on par with what people are getting in the States. For example, it ranges from \$50 to \$120 an hour in the States for SEO consultancy. So as I said, yes, certainly there's like a big gap between the kind of two income fields.

Kathryn: So would you say that \$50,000, is it beginning range or...

Casey: So, you know, like I'm on several, um, like you know, Facebook groups and things like that for digital workers. And this question comes up a lot. And you know, I, I, I constantly see a very, very big range. So I would say that maybe like beginning-beginning, I have seen people perhaps starting at, you know, \$30,000, 40,000 then others who, who come in and say, I wouldn't charge less than a hundred dollars per hour. But as I said, I think the reality is, is that when you are starting, people are struggling to get more than \$15,

\$20 an hour without a, a background to support them. What I have found is that, uh, people who came from a very well built professional career, so say for example, they did work in an office for 10, 15 years with very big clients. You know, that were garnered through their company, those people tend to transition much better. And so for them as a starting independent worker there, they start at the top. But for someone like me who have, I've never worked in a company in this field, um, I would say maybe the beginning range is like probably even down to like, yes, \$30,000 up to 50,000 a year.

Kathryn: How much of that do you think is experience and how much of it is confidence?

Casey: That's a good question. Certainly it's a, it's a mix of both. Um, that is probably one reason why I do put a lower wage because I wasn't confident I could get the results that, uh, that was expected of me. You know, as an SEO consultant or digital marketer, you are expected to increase business growth by 30% to 50% easily. And so that, those are pretty big numbers. So confidence was one thing, but I do find that experience does play a big role. Especially the most important thing is your portfolio. So if you have worked with really big clients or clients in like big cities, like you know, a client in New York is very different than having a client in a, in perhaps Istanbul for example. One thing I found that when I lived, left Istanbul, the city. You know, having clients in, in Istanbul didn't account for much towards my portfolio. Now having clients in the states, I'm finding that translates much better towards my professional experience and each time that's helping me to demand a higher wage. But certainly as I said, it's all about your portfolio.

Casey: If you can prove that you've had many years or with really good clients, you can get a high wage. The other thing as well is results. Marketing is very result based. So the most important thing is again, is proving the growth that you have done in the past and the results of that. And I've found that having a few small successes has also enabled me to get a higher range. Of course that goes hand in hand with confidence, right? So when you do know that you can do this successfully, uh, it also gives you that confidence to ask for a high wage. The only thing is, like I said before, is that many people, uh, going towards remote work to save money so they know they, you know, there's no shortage of experts in every country. Uh, you have to find your middle ground of what you're going to offer them.

Casey: That's much better than what they can find, you know, around their office. Because at the end of the day, sometimes it is easier to have a worker who can come into the office, just for communication or things like that, that that is a bonus. So, you know, you have to really find the balance of why they should hire you. You're never going to be able to come to the office, but you have to have all these other things, great experience, get great results and potentially just provide that slight savings for them, uh, that, you know, makes you a competitive employee.

Kathryn: When it comes time to find a new contract, about how long does that take?

Casey: That's tricky. So, you know, this last job, I mean, oh that my current job actually, uh, but you know, the last job search I had to do was about two years ago and having started a new business with my husband, as I said, I didn't really have, have time. So you know, to

kind of like wait out getting the perfect job. And I actually found a full time job within three weeks of finishing my old job. And, yeah, within three weeks I was working again and I've been in that contract full time for two years. So it was a, it was a successful job hire, however insane that also, let's think that in that time I must have sent like a hundred CVs. It was crazy. Like I was really just like, as I said, I needed, I needed to get a job quickly. So I was working super fast and every time that I've found a job, I probably have found it within a month.

Casey: But just because I've been like super diligent. However, if, if I were to like wait out to find that perfect job or maybe like finding that perfect wage, because you know, to get hired quick you usually just, I probably have taken a lower wage because of that. But if I were to wait out, I would say that up to three months would be nothing, you know, to really find like a top, top job. I do find that a lot of people have similar struggles in that for the first month or the second month or the third month you generally kind of, you end up taking like whatever you can find. You might like write an article here for \$50 or you know, I, I have done things like that to like to fill in that gap. You know, doing like a small website fix or something like that. And the wages are very low. So, and you know, I've seen people also try and mostly those who don't have experience and also takes them a lot longer to find proper work. So if you really want that top, top job, absolutely three months or longer, much like any traditional job.

Kathryn: What's your number one tip for women looking to get into digital marketing?

Casey: As I said before, you should know what you're talking about. Otherwise you have zero competition. Or, you know, you're not competitive compared to what other people can hire. So you know, you need to know what you're talking about. You need to have experience. So education, online courses, things like that will certainly help. The other thing is I think what has helped me to get here as someone who started without experience within a company, is that you do have to accept a lot of perhaps, things that you don't like along the way. Taking those small little jobs, building up your portfolio, having experience as an independent worker, all these tiny little steps. Take you to one day, get that awesome job that will bring you a much better wage, better conditions, things like that. Education and don't be afraid to take a few steps back job wise before you take a few steps forward.

Kathryn: What are your next steps?

Casey: As I said before, you know, I've always actually worked full time as an independent worker because like I was saying before, it does take a long time to kind of like find all those little jobs or it takes a lot of effort to find, you know, to work with different clients because you can spend 50% of your time searching for clients and 50% of the time working and if you're not financially independent or you don't have like a big savings to get you started, then you know, I often find myself going into full time work just to kind of be more secure and not to waste time, you know, finding constant clients. However, I would actually like to transition to that model, where I do have several regular clients. I think that that's the secret to making a lot more money, getting more clients, kind of doing like an agency, getting more clients, outsourcing, you know, the kind of easy work,

getting a few small employees, doing more like part time work for, for a higher number of clients.

Casey: Certainly I'd like to transition to that in my current job. Eventually, once I've done all the work that I need to do, I'm going to try and use that as a springboard to start in that. So reducing that to maybe like a part-time client and then, you know, building on top of that client by client. Certainly I like to have that little bit of security while I do that and it keeps me kind of financially fluid during the whole process. I also want to switch more to doing my own things as well. If I can do that successfully. As I said before, building up a, a number of webpages I'm managing two at the moment. I would like to expand that number and trying to do my own sales and things like that. You know, I'm very passionate about Mexico. I would really love that my Mexican webpage can eventually support, you know, like selling artisanal goods and finding a revenue for like hand crafts and you know, Mexican specialities and things like that. And that would just be step one, maybe next one can be like a real estate website. So, you know, there's many ideas in that respect that I would also like to develop once I get time. That's the other key.

Kathryn: Where can listeners find you?

Casey: That is actually one thing, I haven't set up my own professional webpage at the moment. I'm just kind of working through my Mexican web page, which is mexlocal.com. Also all of my Instagram and Twitter and Facebook on my name, which is Casey Marriott. So, also I'm active on those social media platforms.

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

Casey: Thanks for having me. It was lovely to talk to you today.

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 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/028 that's compasspod.com/028.