

Episode 105: Creating a \$500k Business ft. Damaly Shepherd

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One Year from Now
with your host, Hailey Thomas

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There's no right way to grow an online business. And honestly, me and my guests are more than fine with that. I'm Hailey Thomas, and this is the podcast that lets you be a fly on the wall for candid conversations and many lessons from a variety of online entrepreneurs who are growing their businesses based on their own visions. We are on a mission to normalize and laugh about the behind the scenes truth of achieving a new level of success in your business. This is one year from now.

Hailey 00:49

Hello, and welcome to a very special episode of the podcast. I mean, all the episodes are special, but I especially love when I have guests on. And today, I have on my new friend— I just decided we were friends today— Damaly Shepherd. Damaly is a New York-based writer, photographer, and entrepreneur, who really focuses on creating these really amazing photographs, but also experiences for her clients. And today, we're gonna be talking about how she is approaching her first half a million-dollar year in business and a loads of other things. So Damaly, first of all, thank you so much for coming on the show.

Damaly 01:27

Thank you so much for asking me. I'm very excited, Hailey.

Hailey 01:31

Good. So, Damaly and I met— I don't know, like a month ago, maybe, at the live event of the mastermind of my mentor Serena Hicks, who I've mentioned on the show before, and it was a surprise photoshoot with the Damaly and her team. And two things happen: One, I was already following Damaly on Instagram and so, when we walked into the room, we had our eyes closed and then we open them and she was standing there and I was like, "Oh my God." It was a very dramatic moment for me, because her work is so beautiful, but even outside of that, it wasn't just Damaly, right? She had like— I don't know if "second shooter" was the right terminology, I don't know— But there was another shooter there. There was a stylist, there was a makeup artist, somebody was just like, walking around making sure tags were tucked in and people were happy, and it was a really incredible experience. What we felt like on the receiving end was kind of a level up or a shift into the self-concept of, "Of course, I fly in New York-published photographers to come and do my photos. Of course, that happens. Obviously." Yeah, but it was a really cool and fun experience, but I was so taken by how well you had prepared the experience for us and how well you curated that moment for us. And I was like, "I need to talk to her." So, to start off, I've said a bunch of stuff already, but can you introduce yourself and just talk a little bit about the type of photography you do? And how you position your work?

Damaly 03:05

Absolutely. Okay, so I'm Damaly. Again, I'm New York-based. I'm a portrait and branding photographer, and I really do specialize in that experience that you talked about. Like, my goal is to take care of all of the little bits so that my clients can show up with ease, show up comfortable, show up ready to go and without all the stress. So, my goal is always to take off whatever load I can for my clients so that they can just focus on being in front of the camera, because that is work enough. So yeah, that's what I do and how I do it. I've been in business, we're going on five years. Wait, why don't I remember?

Hailey 03:45

No, I do this all the time. It was my five-year anniversary this year in March, and I was thinking it was four years, and I was like, "Oh, no. Oh, no. It's been five years."

Damaly 03:53

Like, it's weird. It's like, "Oh, there it is. Okay, I'm mixing up times." Yes, I have been in business for five years. I have been full-time for three years. I sometimes mix those numbers up like, "How long have done this? I'm going into finishing my third year of only focusing on photography, which is wild."

Hailey 04:11

Yeah. Tell me a little bit about how your team is structured. Is it you and then you've got kind of contractors that you call in? Or, how is your business structured?

Damaly 04:19

Correct. Yeah. So, it's very much like you said, it's me as the photographer and then I have amazing contractors that I love to bring in to just really smoothen out that process and make sure that my clients are getting the best level attention to detail as possible. So, I work with personal stylists and they meet with clients beforehand. They help them shop, they give them mood boards. I work with makeup artists so when you show up, you don't have to like, run around the city trying to figure out what to do. You just kind of just get to come right in and sit in a chair and be taken care of. We offer you some champagne and we have a great day. I have an assistant with me and that is more for me, not my business, because I need support throughout the day. I am putting everything into the client, so my assistant is there to help me make sure that I'm taken care of, too. And then, you know, everything else that goes into the photo. So, I work with retouchers and all those other roles. It's definitely not a one woman show, and I don't aspire to be a one woman show at all. This takes a lot of work and a lot of people, and it's really awesome for the team that I've curated over these last few years.

Hailey 05:20

Yeah. Okay, so let's talk about that, because I think this is an important business model distinction, especially I think, in creative spaces, photography, writing, graphic design, right? There's this thought that, "Clients come to me so that I will touch all the things, so that I will work on all their work." The problem with that is that it's exhausting. It's not scalable, and it actually deprives the client of getting a really excellent experience on all ends, even if you're a very skilled photographer, or writer or designer or whatever. The client is missing out where you are not so great, right? So like, I can barely—I can barely put on my makeup, right? So, like, if I was in your shoes, like, that would be a bad idea. Like, that'd be bad for them and bad for me. And so, I love this model that you've chosen, which is just to be really intentional about curating a list of vendors and a list of people that can support your clients and that support you. Can you talk a little bit about that process of going to find vendors? Like, I'm just interested in hearing, like, "Oh, I might have worked with this vendor once, but it wasn't really a fit, so we had to have a conversation, or I just didn't call them back, but then we got this person," type of stories. How's it been curating your team?

Damaly 06:33

Yeah, it's been amazing and challenging. For me, one of the values of my company is that we're always going to look for BIPOC contractors first. As a black woman who centers black women in my work, it's very important to me that my makeup artist and my stylist understand black women, especially for my hair and makeup artists. I know, firsthand, what it's like, I've experienced this type of shoot myself, where I sat in a chair with someone who did not understand this hair and was not exactly sure about the skin tone. And it's awful, and that's just not it, and honestly, I hate to say it, but we're used to that experience of having someone who doesn't know. So, luckily for me, I live in New York, which is amazingly diverse, and I hire makeup artists who are usually black at this point, too, though. I mean, I have a bunch of people on my list and my team who are black, and they just bring in this comfort level that says, "We got you, don't worry about it, we're gonna take care of you." Like, it's an immediate blend, no issues there. And it's just so important and so special for them to get the experience of just being like everyone else, right? Like, that's really all you want.

Hailey 07:40

Yeah, that's the experience that I had sitting in your in the chair with the makeup artist and the stylist. I was like, "Oh, I've never had a black stylist and a black makeup artist and a black photographer all at the same time." And it— I don't know how it sounds for you, but truly, it's like getting to be like everyone else, right? Like, I think about it like, I live in central Illinois, right? Slightly less diverse than New York City, but the number of photoshoots I've done or weddings I've been in where there's a hair person or a makeup artist, and it's always this like, "Oh, I don't know if I can help her. I don't know if I have that color foundation. I'm not sure, this lighting is a little funky because she's a little dark." Like, it's just an uncomfortable experience and that affects how you show up on camera. And then, just the business side of it, like you said, you built your business with intention. As you center black and brown women in your work, that is reflected throughout your business. Absolutely. And I also love that like, someone else does the retouch work, someone else is doing makeup and hair, someone else is always there. So, tell me then, if clients aren't coming for the fact that Damaly touches every single portion of the process, why do they come to you? What are you selling?

Damaly 08:52

Oh, that's such a good question, Hailey. Oh, damn, okay.

Hailey 08:56

I think we may have the answer already, but still.

Damaly 09:00

That's a big hitting question. Okay, so, it's so interesting because they are not coming for me to touch everything, but they're still coming for me, and that's such a really cool thing to see now. I've gotten really good thanks to lots of coaching and marketing help with being myself and attracting clients who super understand what I'm about and what this experience is. They're able to identify if they need it or not. And so, even though I'm not gonna run around all day and do every single little thing, they know that when we have that time together, when they sit in front of my camera and everything stops for both of us, they're getting that experience.

Hailey 09:41

It's like they're getting— and I like, super set you up for this question— but what you're getting is your brain applied to this experience. It's your specific brain applied to the experience of getting these portrait photos taken or branded photos taken. If you had a mechanic shop, they would be paying for your philosophies on how car mechanics work and your philosophies on how clients are taken care of, and your philosophy on the speed in which we do the oil change. Like, when we talk about scaling something as customizable as a creative service, what they're coming for is your thoughts on the thing, not your hands on the thing.

Damaly 10:20

Absolutely, it's absolutely that and it's fun, because even though I'm not in every piece of it, I am, and like, even down to the final product where we're putting finishing touches on that, like I do put my mark on everything that we do, and they know that. There's something special to that. And it's so cool now to be like, recognizable. Like, sometimes people are like, I knew that was your photo before I even saw your name, and that's because like, I have a very specific standard. So, that makeup and the style and the light and the retouch, like all that has to be in my vision skills. So, I guess that is what they're getting.

Hailey 10:57

Right. Yeah. And that's exactly it, right? It's the standard that you set for your work. I think standard is the best word, but like, when stuff goes out the door, this is what it looks like. And you've built a team that, again. This is where I think people get caught up and, we'll talk in a second about kind of approaching a million or approaching half a million— I'm just gonna speak that out loud for you that it's a million after that. But as we're approaching that total, the hard part is differentiating for some people, who think like, "No, I have to keep doing everything," but that slows everything down. It's not profitable. It's hard, you can't move as quickly as you want if you're like trying to do every single little piece versus: Who do I need to hire? Who can think like this? Who do I need to hire that can understand my vision? How do I need to communicate so that my team understands the vision? Like, your job as far as I see, because it is the craft itself of the photos and the business building, but it's also like: How do you help your team understand the vision so well, then they do 90% of getting the product there, and then you get to do that last 10% and send it out the door? That's the work when we're at talking about half a million or more, like that's the work. Who do you bring in? And how well are you able to communicate and lead your team to do most of the stuff?

Damaly 12:17

And honestly, like those things are all set up with love for myself and my client because I could retouch all of your images. Are you gonna get it this year? Probably not. If we want things done in a timely manner, like, I can help you with your clothes, but it's not going to be as good as when Felicia does it, but I could do a little something. It's just about like: How can I give them the best top tier experience? And that's by staying in my lane and letting everyone else take over for their own lanes.

Hailey 12:47

So good. So good. Okay, you're in your fifth year, three years full time. Do you remember your numbers at kind of a high level leading up to your fifth year?

Damaly 12:58

Yes. So like, when I filed for my LLC, we made zero, right? Like, it wasn't even anything yet. Like, I worked full-time, I was working full time, right? So, it was all just about like, we're starting, we're starting to try to think of it as a business, but we're not because we have a full time job, too. And we're like, figuring all of that out. So, those first two years, I think I made next to nothing, if anything, I don't really remember those numbers. Year three was the medium where I worked halfway, and then I quit. So, I made \$19,000 in my business, year three. In 2020— I know how to do the math, but in 2020, I made almost \$60,000. And that was a big deal because we had a pandemic, we were shut down for half of the year, I almost quit, like it was a rough year. And we still, like, I still ended the year like, people paid me to take their photo. And then in 2021, we ended at \$140,000. So, it's been a really fun few years figuring this out.

Hailey 14:04

Yeah. What are some of the thoughts that you had about your work that propelled you to continue going? I'm even curious, like, let's say just 2020 and 2021? What were some of your thoughts about your business that you're like, "Oh, I can see it. Like I can see the vision of what this could be. Can I keep going?"

Damaly 14:20

Oh, that's a good question. So, I think after I came back, after like, being depressed— I live in New York, right? So, COVID had hit us hard and fast. It was early in the year still, and I was just gaining that momentum with clients, right? And then it was like, "Oh, that's funny. No, you can't do that anymore." That really sucked me into a nosedive, personally, and I just had to cocoon in and let myself feel big feelings for a few months. And eventually, I came out and I was like, "Oh, I'm creative. I need to shoot things. Where are people?" And I got back on the wagon there. So, in 2020, some of the thoughts that helped out once I began to shoot again, was— How do I say this? So, in 2020, I really wanted to create something that was different from what all the photographers in my group were doing. So, I have a really great mentor and she teaches like, a session fee, right? It's where you start with like, a small number amount that covers like, hair and makeup, and then you upsell your images from there. And so, I always kind of wanted something a bit more package-based. And I kind of wanted like, a real commitment from my client upfront versus purchase later. Which like, it's a great model for a lot of people, but after I looked at it for those first beginner years, by then I'm like, "My work is good. This is what my work is worth," and I decided to go towards package base. And then, with those packages came the question of, "Well, how do I really create an experience that is different?" Like, an experience that feels like I designed it, and that my clients will love. That's where I came up with, like, my VIP day, where we added in a stylist and like, sometimes we do location rentals, and really it's like, the sky's the limit. How do we give you whatever you need, whatever that looks like? And oh goodness, I lost myself. What was the question? I was taking myself on a little journey.

Hailey 16:17

Honestly, I don't even remember it. Oh, what were the thoughts that you had? I'm just sitting here like, "This is so good," I'm taking notes.

Damaly 16:25

I lost myself. Okay, what were the thoughts? Okay, so the thoughts were: I really want to create something that is personalized, that feels luxurious, and that quenches that kind of amusement park feeling, but for women, right? Like that's really it, right? And so for me, I was like, "Well, what excites me?" If you were to say, "Damaly, we've got your clothes covered. When you show up, there's going to be closet there," I would pass out, right? If you say, "Your hair and makeup is being done by a professional stylist, who like works all over New York City," I'm like, "Okay, I'm in," right? And then this beautiful location, this photographer is gonna pose you and do all of that, right? So, it was just like, I really want to create something special. And then, I kind of had to get out of my own head because of course, once we start to add on contractors and other people to the team, there's numbers, the price has to rise with that as well, right? So, I had to also overcome my own feelings of like, "Well, is this too much? Will anyone buy it?" All those kinds of things. So, some of the thoughts that helped me were that my clients want what I have to offer, the experience. Like, this experience is so filled with fun, not just transformation, but fun and joy and expression like, that is something worth being paid for. Which, as a creative I think is important because we're often undervalued, we can feel sometimes really undervalued or like, "Oh, well, art is very subjective, and like the meaning and value of it can really be up and down." But for me, I was like, "No, no, this is valuable," right? Like, when I work with you, we're going to change something in your life and we do that. So, those were big thoughts around just like, building up my own worthiness and yeah, repelling worthlessness.

Hailey 18:07

I think it's a real maturing that has happened as an entrepreneur and I love essentially, once you do this work and can like, see how you built up this body of thoughts that help you, you get to do and have this be applicable to any business for the rest of your life. And I love a couple things that you said that I want to point out. There's a difference between low value questions at this point and high value questions. A low value question is, like you said, "Is this too much money? Will anyone buy this?" Like, that's not valuable. The more valuable question that you asked is like, "What creates this amusement park feeling for my clients?" There's a difference of quality of those questions and the results that those questions create. And I love also, because, right, art is subjective, and one of my friends is a writer, and I kind of got on her because she was like— Shout out to Stephanie, if you're listening to this, but she kind of like, had some thoughts about the way that people value writers and writing as a career. And then, she kind of made some comments about her own work and I was like, "My brother in Christ, the call is coming from inside the house, you have to start first, you go first."

Damaly 19:11

Yes, exactly it. Yeah.

Hailey 19:12

So like, when you decided your work is valuable, then you can just go ahead and you're not questioning whether or not it's valued or asking people if they think it's valuable. You're just doing the work and the people that think it's valuable come along. Because there's some people that, for every work and every genre of everything, they are just like, "Oh, that's hideous, and I don't like it. Gross," right? Like, that's fine. You don't need everyone to like it. That's not the purpose. And so, you have to go first with the value that you bring, and it takes those high-quality questions to understand how you value joy, how

you value luxury, how you value peace of mind, and all that has to be solid before you ask somebody else to value that stuff for you and then trade money for it, too. Like, we got to be on top of that before we do that. The other thing I wanted to mention from that part of the story was just the reality of it. Again, this is like, a long-term entrepreneur career that we're in. The reality is our interaction with our business comes in seasons. So, sometimes we're experiencing big booms and we're all in and it's the main thing. Sometimes we're like, a little confused and spinning in our businesses. Sometimes it's a refuge for us and it feels good. Sometimes we pull back from it. And so, I don't know, sometimes, I think we just pretend that like, "No, you're supposed to be all in all the time, and it's supposed to take up this much time or space all the time." But like, that fluctuates with what's happening in the world, and what's happening within you or within your family or whatever. And that's okay, that's a good thing. Like, nature has seasons, everything has seasons, our relationship with our work also has seasons. I will caveat this and say there's a difference between, like, just dipping altogether. But yeah, sometimes you're in it and you're doing the work and you're having big booms and it's fun, and sometimes you're not. And that's good and normal and healthy.

Damaly 21:01

So important. I feel like, it's so fun that you said that because I think that's my 2022 right now. Like, Q1 was amazing. Like, we've already booked \$100k in clients so far, just in the first quarter. And q2 is different, because I'm also building out another side of my business that I have never done before. And so like, things are shifting, and that photography side seems a tiny bit slower, because I've not marketing as hard as I usually get to, and that's okay for this. So, it's just like, working on myself of like, "This is okay, you're still doing fine." Those ebbs and flows are natural.

Hailey 21:40

And like, they're on purpose, right? You are not setting expectations for yourself of like, "Well, also, I need to book another \$180k and work, and I'm going to launch this thing." And so, I think we always want to be checking our brains for like, accidental expectations, because sometimes we do be thinking that, but we won't say it and then we'll be like, "I don't know why I'm so anxious." Yes, you do, because your brain thinks that you should be doing something else. So like, always check those things, but it's on purpose, it is with purpose that you are truly having agency and maneuvering your business versus just being like, "Yes, it's supposed to be a straight rocket of growth." Like no, we're actually going to go around the corner this way and go up this hill and down this curve, and it's with intention. So, my favorite thing, because when we talked before, and I was all nosy, because you were just trying to show me my pictures and I was like, "Hey, I've got questions." But you mentioned doing like 100k. Is it 100k? In Q1, 100k. I love it. My mentors share this with me, but it's also a thought I love. Q1 is usually like the slowest quarter of the year, right? Like, things only get better and better towards the end of the year. And so, even the idea that this is the least amount of money you're gonna make in 2022. Like, the smallest amount you're gonna make this whole year will be \$100,000. That's like the babyest amount.

Damaly 23:11

That's so wild to even hear, especially because I did \$140K all of last year. So, to do what I did in a quarter, which I think took me nine months? Nine or ten months, you know what I mean? I really only hit those bigger numbers towards the last few months of 2021. Like, that's just wild. I know we overuse "Quantum Leap," but also like, wow, how else?

Hailey 23:35

Yeah, and that's exactly what it is. And like, that's the— I don't know, like, I don't know you that well, but I'm also not surprised thinking about how you are thinking about your work and how you're curating even your experience in your business, the same way you curate your clients experience when they're being with you. So, like, it's not surprising to me that someone who was able to create at that level is also doing that for herself inside her business. Like, this is like the babies amount of money you're gonna make all year, right?

Damaly 24:02

I see it. I'm open to it. I had not thought about it that way, so I appreciate this. Yeah.

Hailey 24:07

So, that's one of my favorite thoughts, like every day that I get paid or sign a client or whatever, I'm like, "Oh, yes, this is a smallest amount of money to make all year." And like, as we talked about doing half a million— You can tell me how you think about it, but I'm like, "You're pretty much gonna make half a million dollars." Like, I'm not like wildly concerned or feel like I'm not sure, because of the quality of thoughts, the quality of the experiences that you've curated, like, what clients know you for, your maturity of thinking. It's less about, "Okay, I need exactly this many projects at this amount of time," or whatever. And it's more about: How do I bring forth more of that into the world? And knowing that the money comes from solving problems like that.

Damaly 24:46

Yeah, no, that totally fits it because I definitely came into the year feeling like half a million was where I was gonna end up, and it's wild to say out loud. It fights with like, the inner self who isn't used to being this confident, where it's like, "Can I say this?" Like, bitch, what are you saying? Like, who are you? No, but I firmly like started this year thinking, "I'm gonna do half a million this year." And I'm not exactly sure the how, I'm not exactly sure where that's coming from, or the type of sessions is or what I'm going to be doing, but I just really had this strong feeling. And so, to have Q1 kind of just come up like that, and it's only January, I did not realize that that's where we would land. And as we just kept hitting it, I was like, "Oh, okay, like, you said you want to have this, let's show you how far we can do in those three months." So, I am really pleased with myself. I mean, that's just...wow.

Hailey 25:41

That's such a revolutionary thing, right? So, we haven't even talked about like, your first-generation entrepreneurial story, but like, especially as a person in a BIPOC body, and especially as a woman, like the idea that you can just say out loud, like, it feels almost illegal to just say out loud, "First of all, I'm gonna make a half a million dollars, and it's gonna be so fun and pretty easy, and I'm really proud of myself. I'm really happy with myself." The thought that has propelled a lot of my own pursuit of half a million, a little over, probably 600k this year has been the thought, "I'm really impressed with myself. I'm very impressive. I am very, very impressive." And it feels like, and I know that's that conditioning, that it feels like, "Oh, you can just like say that about yourself. You're being conceited." But like, I've decided I just don't care.

Damaly 26:31

We're gonna have to be. Honestly, we have to have the audacity, and it's because we were programmed not to, right? Like, as two young black women who grew up in this country, right? Like, no one says, "Oh, yeah, you can go do these things." So, in order for us to do it, we have to decide on our own, even though it's like, revolutionary in its own way. So, I love that about you and about me too.

Hailey 26:53

Yeah, quick backstory of before you were a full-time in your business, you worked in tech. Tell me a little bit about, I guess, the differences or similarities you notice about the skills you picked up out of tech and their application to your business?

Damaly 27:10

That's a really great question. So, when I was in tech, I did cost ops and then I ended on the HR team. I was a recruiting coordinator. So that was a lot of—

Hailey 27:26

Oh my gosh, did we talk about this? Because that was my job. Wait, you were a recruiter?

Damaly 27:31

I was a recruiter. Okay, that's cool. Okay, so you understand that? So, coordinators are similar in that we do the running around, we do the liaising with incoming candidates, we do all the scheduling and just trying to make sure that people are happy and having a good experience. So, I guess that ties really well into what I do now as a photographer, which is like, how can I make sure this person is always having an amazing experience? And I guess, even further back, I'm a preacher's kid and I grew up in church, and we were one of those families where like, you know, we're like Von Traps and they're always throwing events and singing. And so like, I'm used to like, this party planning, people pleasing—I'm working through something for the people pleasing, like, side of myself, so it does make sense that like, I see that dotted around through all the jobs that I've had, and now my own business, which has the best kind of people pleasing that I can do.

Hailey 28:22

Yeah, that's so good, yeah. I think recruiting helped me to be really good at selling, in a way like selling this role, selling this company, but it also came with— I don't know, if you had this experience or if you were— I can't remember if you were like technical or not, but I had this experience where the company I was at, it was like, "Oh, you're cute, project management HR person, but like, we'll let the real technical people handle things." And so, part of my— I know, I love the company I worked at, but it wasn't great in those moments. But part of my pursuit of half million plus building a business is just coming into my own and kind of understanding that I had those little birds chirping in my ears and had internalized a lot of that, growing up internalizing stuff. But being able to see it, and then actively act counter of those ways, is what helps me to create the confidence I need to like, nourish these thoughts and ask these high-quality questions and decide that I am the type of person that just has half a million-dollar businesses and buys and sells assets. And yeah, that is who I am.

Damaly 29:23

Yes, yes. Yes, I want that. Yeah.

Hailey 29:26

Okay, so, I think the last thing that I want to chat with you about, and I'm curious if there's anything that's come up for you that we haven't talked about yet, but you want to, is: What's the One Year from Now vision or your business? What do you foresee in spring of 2023 for your work?

Damaly 29:44

Wow, I cannot say I thought about this yet to be. Yeah, I haven't thought about this yet. So, I think that in 2023, on the photography side, there's going to be a lot more simplicity and automation to what we're creating. And by that, I mean, currently, it's very much like, we scattered dates all around, and whenever people are needed, we jump in, versus the way that I'm going to need to be restructuring as I expand out in other things, because I love to write, I'm also a coach, I love to help, I'm now helping other photographers do what I've done in my business— For the photography side, I foresee having really set times, traveling in certain places in certain times, and just having also great downtime to see and live a good life, because that's what I'm working for. I want to enjoy the life that I'm here to live. And then, just building out that other side of a business that I'm really, really passionate about, which is like, the coaching side and helping folks like myself put to words what it is we do and what we capture, right? And translating in that the image is amazing, but also helping build beautiful words that go along with those beautiful images, it's something that I'm super passionate about as a writer. So yeah, those are my two big things for 2023, and I don't know how much money that means, but I'm sure that I'll feel it. I don't think it matters at that point. Like, I feel like, it'll just be more about like, "Am I living the type of life that I want to live? Do I feel the kind of freedom that I want to have? And I'm able to, like do those things?" Which I think I will, so that's exciting.

Hailey 29:49

Yeah, I love that so much. So, I do this in depth One Year from Now vision exercise with folks, and sometimes there is like a dollar amount and there's a lot of specificity, and sometimes it's more, "Here's the experience that I want to have. Here's how I want to feel. Here are some things that for sure, if it ain't it, I'm not going through the next year. If that's not a part of it, just forget it. Leave me here at 2022." So, I think it's always interesting when I asked that question, like what comes up for people, what exactly comes up, and it not needing to look one way or the other. So, is there anything we haven't talked about that you'd want to share with folks that are kind of also approaching a half a million-dollar year? Other BIPOC entrepreneurs? Any thoughts or things you want to share?

Damaly 32:03

It's a really good question. I think that when you're going after this goal, it really just is important to— There's this really great TikTok, I'm sure you've seen it where they're like, "Be delusional," you know what I'm saying? And I feel like that's where I'm at, right? Just, even if it just feels out of reach, just be delusional, and just let the thoughts simmer that like, "This could be possible for me." And then, I feel like everything else will show up and conspire to show you how possible the dreams that you have in your heart are. So, that is like, be delusional, do it anyway, even if you're the only one there. And I know the fear of feeling like I'm the only one there doing it this way. And there were some big moments

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while I was building between 2020 and 2021, where like, all of my friends are doing it the other way and they're killing it, right? And they're like, making all this money, and I was like, "Am I doing this wrong? Like, I'm the only one doing this, should I be swapping it over?" And I was very stubborn and I was like, "No, we're gonna see this through." And now, it's like my own beautiful little lane of like, how I like to do it and clients are like, "Oh, no, that's what I want." So, just stay committed, right? Be stubborn, stay committed to your vision and things will work itself out.

Hailey 33:16

So good. Damaly, thank you so much for coming on the podcast. Where can people find you online?

Damaly 33:20

Thank you for having me. Yeah, best places on Instagram. I'm @ByDamaly. Yeah, and also check out my website if you want to see my work and more of my photos and you can read some of my writing there as well. So yeah,

Hailey 33:32

Yeah, and how to hire her is also probably there, too.

Damaly 33:35

And come hire me, too. Come to New York, or come see me when I visit your city and we'll have a fabulous fun photoshoot, as you've heard.

Hailey 33:41

Yes, thank you so much. Thank you all for listening. We will see you on the next episode.

Thank you for listening to this episode of One Year from Now. You can find the show notes and all the links we mentioned at BrainspaceOptimized.com/Podcast. If you want to chat me up about all things entrepreneurship, then head to BrainspaceOptimized.com and join my email list. This is where we have rich conversations about the experience of business ownership. It's thoughtful, it's funny, I like getting responses and chatting with you all, it's a good time. Lastly, you can find me on Instagram @BrainspaceOptimized. We will see you in the next episode.