

Disrupt Yourself Podcast

EPISODE 170: MOLLY BECK

Welcome to the Disrupt Yourself Podcast, a podcast where we discuss strategies and advice for how to climb the *S Curve of Learning™* in your career in life, disrupting who you are to slingshot, into who you can be. I'm your host, Whitney Johnson, and today our guest is Molly Beck, the CEO and founder of venture backed Messy.fm and all-in-one platform for podcasters, which is the first reason we invited her to join us. Podcasting has definitely disrupted blogs and it is not done. The second reason we asked her to join us is that her story of how she became an entrepreneur is quite compelling and extremely relevant given the current world situation.

WHITNEY Molly, thank you for joining us.

MOLLY Thank you so much for having me on this podcast Whitney, I am such a fan of the show and what a treat to be a guest on it today.

WHITNEY Oh, that's fun, I did not know that. So that's delightful to hear. So, here's the big opening question for me. Typically, I ask people where they grew up, but I think I want to change it a little bit and ask you about how you graduated from college during the great recession, you had no job and tell us what you did. Set the stage for us.

MOLLY Sure. So, it is 2009, and I am graduating college, I am a finance major and I feel like I've done everything right. I have done multiple internships. I got the, my se- going into my senior year, I got the coveted internship at Goldman Sachs, moved to New York, had this great experience interning there, felt like I was really set up for success. Except, in 2009, the markets crashed and all of my dreams of having this amazing start and the analyst class of, at a big eye bank went out the window and I started to really panic about what my next move would be. I had this vague idea that maybe if I started writing on the internet, which was sort of, I mean, it sounds so funny to say writing on the internet now, but back then it was like, Twitter was just starting, Facebook was really a platform just to talk to your friends and post pictures from the night before, and I didn't even read any blogs or know anyone that had a blog. But I had this idea that if I could write for the internet, maybe I could change my resume to look like I was not only a finance background, but I also knew how to do, you know, "digital things." So, I started writing this blog. The blog was called and is called, *Smart, Pretty and Awkward*. The gimmick is three tips, how to be smarter, how to be prettier, how to be less awkward. And I remember the moment that I press send on the first blog post and starting the blog really changed my whole professional life.

And the goal of starting the blog worked, I ended up getting my first job at a marketing agency that specialized in financial companies. I was able to sort of have this really great career in marketing all because I was able to start a blog. And the reason I could start a blog is because a company had found a way to scale content creation and they took care of the backend, so that creators like me could just focus on their words. That company is Blogspot, but similar competitors would be WordPress, now Wix, Squarespace. Those companies handle the backend of digital creation for bloggers so that anyone can become a blogger and that sets a stage for Messy. Yeah.

WHITNEY

I started blogging in 2006 and I had a blog on Typepad and it was called *Dare to Dream*. And so it's interesting because as I hear you I think, "Oh I was kind of an early adopter when it comes to blogging, not super early, but early ish". And, anyway, it's just really fascinating to hear your story about how you graduate from college, you get an internship at Goldman Sachs, which is like, that is the best you can do in financial services at that point in time.

MOLLY

Oh my gosh, my dad cried when I called it. I've never, I have not seen my dad cry since then. When I called it out, I remember where I was, I was like, "Dad, I got it, they just called." And like the salary was \$50,000 for this internship and I had never, that was just such an amazing number to me. I remember writing the word 50,000 download- on the phone with the woman being like, they, and it would, you know, I didn't even get \$50,000 because it was like prorated, and I was just there for a specific, and I wasn't even there for a whole year, but it was just like such a moment in my life. And I often think about, just to be transparent, when will I have another success in business that will make my dad be so proud of me. And that's something that does really drive me is thinking about what's something that I can do that will really make my, that will be so clear that it's a pinnacle in my career that I could try to achieve.

WHITNEY

Oh, that's so sweet. And I, but it is interesting, isn't it? That idea of like annualized \$50,000 and I—you're, now you're getting me to go down memory lane. So my very first job working on Wall Street as a secretary was \$19,000, yes, you heard it folks. One, nine, zero, zero, zero, thousand dollars per year. And I remember then when I eventually got a new job and it was \$25,000 a year, and then I decided I'm going to create a stretch goal. I am going to make \$50,000 a year. And, and it just, and I guess I'm saying that because I remember when I got that \$50,000, similar to the experience that you had, it's just this moment of elation, but there's a piece of you that almost doesn't believe it. You're like, five, zero, zero, zero, zero. I don't know, what are your thoughts?

MOLLY

Yeah, I mean, and then after I made \$50,000, you know, prorated annualized at Goldman, my next job doing cold, you know, glorified cold calling was way less than \$50,000. It was half of that, and I felt a lot of, I felt grateful that I had a job after graduation, but I felt a lot of shame that this internship I had had made my dad cry, paid this amazing salary and I wasn't, I was reacting, I was personalizing what was happening in the larger market, which was just the reality was, Goldman wasn't having any analyst class that year, there, it was very hard to get into big banks. Everyone was taking the jobs that were offered to them and I was lucky to have a job and I should have been grateful for that, but instead I spent a lot of years thinking, how am I ever going to make that salary that I made for that-

WHITNEY

Hmm.

MOLLY

Very specific internship time.

WHITNEY

So Molly, I think you bring up something really interesting is this, I, because we're now not in the middle of a great recession, although we could be, we don't know yet, it's too early. But this idea of college graduates or people earlier in their career, but actually

anybody in their career, of something not coming through the way that you thought it was going to, having nothing to do with you, but then you use that word shame, like you felt shame that you didn't have a job that made \$50,000 a year, it was \$25,000 a year. So, do you have any other thoughts on that before we go on?

MOLLY

You know, I guess if I could go back in time and tell myself anything, it would be like this is actually going to make sense someday, you will keep blogging at night like you're doing now. Your blog will become something. You will eventually get that book deal. This like crappy job that you have where you're making cold calls, like you know, sending emails on like a very rudimentary form of MailChimp, eventually you will have jobs that you will be proud of. You will make more money. You will, eventually, you'll own your own company, but it will take some time to get there. And that's just a hard lesson in the moment.

And the way that ... What really saved me in those years was having a project of my own that was not tied to work. And the blog that I started to get a job became my lifeline. I controlled it, nobody else controlled it, what I said went. And, I would encourage someone if they're feeling out of control in their career, whether they don't have the job they want, they're underemployed, they're just not happy, have a project that's either monetized or not that you 100% can control. I think it's very positive to be a creator in any, in any form.

WHITNEY

Hmm. And you know what I love is that every day you were writing in your blog, how am I going to be smarter, how am I going to be prettier, how am I going to be less awkward? So every day you were coaching yourself, right?

MOLLY

Yeah.

WHITNEY

Coaching yourself into that future that you wanted to have. So any tips that you would have, I mean you, you shared one tip already of like look back on and just say to yourself, zoom out, put this in perspective, this is not about you, this is about the economy. You will, if you will stay in this, right? You can't pull back, you can't numb yourself. You will stay in this. You will get that job. You will have that career that you're happy and proud of. But are there any other practical tips or suggestions that you would make for people that find themselves in this situation right now?

MOLLY

I think right now if you are struggling with thinking of your next step, I would start a podcast, and let me tell you why. One, I think blogs are a little bit dying. That industry has been disrupted. It's very hard to start a blog now and have it be something that's like new and shiny and getting the attention that you want. Where podcasting is a field that's wide open and there are creation tools that make it easy to record, edit and publish that show. And what I would do is I would think of, okay, who do I want to hire me? Let me invite those people onto my show as a guest. So if you want to be a journalist, you're going to do a show called *Journalism for Newbies*. You're going to find 12 people that live in the area that you want to work, that have the job title, that could hire you and invite them on your podcast.

Spend 45 minutes having a great conversation with them, asking them how they got their job, what did they love about the field, what advice they would have, do an awesome job at follow-up. And then three weeks later when there's an opening at their company, pass along your resume and be like, "Hey, you were on my podcast, would you consider me for this?" So you get to, you check off all these boxes at once you're a creator, you're in a new field that's very hot, and then you're using your podcast to make connections to people that can hire you.

WHITNEY

Hmm. It's great advice. Any other advice?

MOLLY I mean, I'm giving advice to myself right now which is-

WHITNEY Good.

MOLLY Which is, you know-

WHITNEY It's the best kind.

MOLLY If I was to go back 10 years, I you know, I would tell myself, "Hey, what you want is coming to you. It's just coming to you in a different way." I am not anywhere near the top of my career, at least I hope not. I'm still at the bottom of the mountain, so I hope 10 years from now when I'm thinking back to this time, I would say, "Hey, it's going to work out. It's just going to be different than what you thought." And it's, I think it's always important to be zooming out wherever we are. Even if we're at the bottom or the top of the mountain, you-

WHITNEY Yeah.

MOLLY Meet the same people going up that you do coming down.

WHITNEY Mm. Oh, those are wise words. So whether you're at the bottom of the S Curve or the top of the S Curve you meet the same people going up that S Curve as you do coming down. Fascinating. Alright, so you started podcasting, you've now started a business called Messy.FM. So tell us about this. What does it do?, and, and how you started this business and where are you because you are now a bonafide entrepreneur, venture backed. Talk to us about it.

MOLLY Yes. Well, so my last job before I started Messy was I was working at Forbes where I was running Forbes podcasts and we had a network of shows and you know, as it happens, I'm sure it happens to you, Whitney, when you work in podcasts, everyone wants to tell you their idea for a show. So I had people all the time being like, "Hey, you do Forbes podcasts. Can I tell you the show I want to start?" So I would listen, they would be so excited and then when I followed up or saw them again and been like, "Hey, how's your podcast coming?" The answer kept coming back. "I didn't start, it seemed too hard. I couldn't figure out how to record. I watched a couple editing tutorials and they were very confusing." And I started thinking about the start of my journey was because Blogspot existed and took care of the backend of blogging so I could become a blogger.

So I started thinking, okay, in 2017 where is the WordPress for podcasts? Where is the software that makes it easy for a nontechnical creator to start? And so after a very nice experience, I had working at Forbes for a few years I left to start that business and Messy FM WordPress for podcasts. At the very beginning of the company, we focused on all content creators coming to us using our services. And in the last couple of weeks, which I'm sure we'll talk about, we've really pivoted to be focused on creators within enterprises that want new, engaging, exciting ways to talk to their team members in a private podcast.

WHITNEY Oh, okay. Yeah, we're going to definitely come back to that. So, it's interesting, one of the questions that I have kind of rolling around in my head is this, you know, I listened to one podcast or interview that you did in preparing for this and you threw out stats of, you know, there were 165 million podcast listeners and 500,000 active podcasts and this was late last year or so, probably about six months ago. You know, what's the updated number and from an S Curve perspective, you know, are you at the low, the middle or high end? Where is podcasting? Is it still at the launch point? Is it in the sweet spot? What are your thoughts?

MOLLY Wow, great question. So it's so exciting I don't know when that podcast was that you listened to, but Apple Podcasts just announced last week they have a million shows now. So the number of active shows has doubled. I mean the show you were listening to you can't be more than a year, maybe year and a half old. So we are definitely seeing an explosion of creators and going along with that, we're seeing explosion of listeners. One in two Americans are regular podcast listeners. They're listening to podcasts at least once a month. And that's so different. I mean, when I started Messy I had many conversations with investors or potential partners where they would be like, "Hey, can you show me what the podcast app is on my phone?" You know, I was having that conversation often and now you know, 18 months later the conversation starts with, "Oh, here's the podcast I'm listening to right now. What are you listening to?" Just the adoption has really taken off and I think on the S Curve, my opinion would be we're somewhere between the low to the middle. I think we're just getting into the sweet spot, I would like to see the one and two number be higher I would be very happy if it was three out of four in the next year. And then in terms of creation, I want to see a world where podcasts are as popular as blogs. And I want to see a world where podcasts doesn't just mean, "Oh, I'm already a celebrity and I have a podcast." I want to see podcasts that people that are studying abroad doing a podcast just for their family back home about this specific time in their life. I want to see a podcasts of teachers using to talk to students so they can, can consume lessons when they're not at the computer. I want to see enterprises that know that people don't watch zoom replays and we need to find a way to offer audio choices for employees that don't want to be sitting at their desk consuming content with no visuals. So I think we're coming into that sweet spot and I am so excited about it.

WHITNEY So in this same interview, and I think it was like November of 2019 you said, you know, "Three years from now it will be too late to start a podcast." -

MOLLY Two and a half years from now. We're on the clock.

WHITNEY It is time to start. So, two questions for you there. What's, we've got a million active podcast right now. What's the average download for those million? Is it what, what's that number?

MOLLY It's a great question. I think this number is going to blow your mind. The median number of listeners per podcast episode is 124-

WHITNEY Hmm. Hmm.

MOLLY And so, you know, rather than that being discouraging because you might think, "Oh okay, you know an average podcast has a couple thousand or you know, you, I think if I was to, if I didn't know that number I would have guessed something higher if I didn't-

WHITNEY Me too.

MOLLY Wasn't working in the industry. And I think that's exciting. And let me tell you why podcasts analytics are completely private. I have no idea if someone's show is doing a million listeners per episode or is doing 124, there's no Comscore for podcasts it's not like an Instagram account where someone can see from day one, "Oh only 27 people follow them. I'm not interested." The fact that the analytics are private gives the podcaster the ability to refine their show to take their show seriously even if other people maybe, you know, like big marketing firms wouldn't. It's just an exciting time where we're seeing the, the merging of like niche shows with a platform that can reach lots of people without the pressure that a social media account has with the number of followers being a public, for public consumption.

So I think that if you are listening to this podcast and you have a podcast of your own and it's under 124 that's awesome. You will have only places to go up and that means that it's not the size of your audience, it's the impact to your audience. If you were listening to this podcast and you have over 124 listens that's awesome. But I don't want you to get so caught up in the listens that you're forgetting to create content that resonates with your listeners, not the size of the audience, the impact to them. How are you changing their lives?

WHITNEY

Hmm, that's so good. All right, so I have a couple of questions and I'm going to throw them out and then you can go in the direction that you want. One is, is that for someone who's listening and thinking, okay, I listened to Molly, I'm going to do this. I am going to start a podcast. What are one or two suggestions that you would make for them?

MOLLY

The first thing I would think about is you need a theme for your podcast. It didn't work in blogging and it's not going to work in podcasts to do a show where it's like, "Hey, I'm Molly and here's my thoughts of the day." You know, you might get some listeners that are your family and friends or if you're going through an extremely unique life experience, but in general you want to have a theme for your show. And I encourage you to think about what do you consistently Google but you can't get results on? What section of the bookstore are you always going to and wishing they had more copies? What sort of people do you want to meet and how can your show be used to bring them on as guests? Think about a theme for your show that is unique but also of interest for you.

Because if the show is not interesting for you, it's not going to be interesting for anyone else, and I would challenge you to think, "Hey, are my thoughts on X, Y, Z really that interesting even to me? Maybe not, but it's bringing on a bunch of experts in a really specific place or doing a deep dive into a topic that I know people haven't uncovered the whole picture of. Think about that when you're thinking about what's a theme for your show. And the second tip would be to think in seasons. It's very hard if you tell yourself, I'm going to come out with a podcast episode every Tuesday morning from now until forever. You want to think, okay, what are eight to 12 episodes I can do around this very specific topic? If we get to the end of season one and the show is doing awesome or I'm really enjoying it, super easy to roll right into season two. If you get to end of season one and you want to change that theme or you want to retool something or you want to just take a break from podcasting, it's really easy to say, "Thanks everyone for a great season one, we'll let you know when season two comes out." Because no one wants to be that person that starts a project, gets excited and then sort of falls off and thinking and seasons gives you a really definite start and end point.

WHITNEY

Mm-hmm. That's interesting. So as I'm listening to you, so we do not do our podcasts and seasons and we started in 2016 and have just gone every week. So question for you is if you wanted to start implementing seasons, what would you do when you're sort of in the middle of it? How would you do that? How would you orchestrate it?

MOLLY

Well, I think that you, for this particular show, you could definitely do, you could group experts together either all in the same field or all giving advice on a specific topic. So if you wanted to really do drill down and do like a podcast mini season where you had five people that all worked in different aspects of the audio industry come in and talk about disruption. Or if you wanted to say, "Hey, this is going to be a COVID themed mini season, we're going to bring people on that are be giving us advice about how to pivot right now." You could sort of group experts or topics together and then what happens is that that becomes a mini season that then people can refer to later. So if the section is on audio, then if someone comes to your podcast for the first time, they're like, "Oh, I work in audio." "Oh cool. Here are five episodes I can just sit through." It makes it easier for new listeners.

WHITNEY Hmm.

MOLLY That would be what I would say for your show. But I'd also say-

WHITNEY Interesting.

MOLLY I would also that you are an, you are special and that you have started a show and come out with new episodes every single week for years. And that speaks to something that a lot of people don't have, including me. It would be hard to do an episode every week for years and years. So you and your team should feel very proud of that dedication because I know it's not easy.

WHITNEY Oh, go team. Okay. All right. So I want to, you came out with this podcast and I think you did a season right? One season-

MOLLY Mm-hmm.

WHITNEY So building on what you just-

MOLLY Yeah one season.

WHITNEY Shared and, I listened to the episode that you did with the fictional Amy Smith.

MOLLY Hmm. Yeah.

WHITNEY And it was really interesting because you were, it was called *The Podcast Whisperer* and people would come on and you would ask them a whole series of questions and then, and then come up with suggestions of what, what kind of podcasts they could create or how they could do that differently. Are you still doing anything like that or what does that look like?

MOLLY I will let you know when season two of *The Podcast Whisperer* drops.

WHITNEY Good.

MOLLY You know that's a great example. I feel like, you know, I have started and done seasons of many different shows just because I love creating in the medium. I've done *The Podcast Whisper*; that was a season long series where I interviewed strangers about their podcast. I did *Smart, Pretty Awkward* where I took my best tips from my blog and put them in audio form. I do a couple of private podcasts like, my son just turned one and I had people submit audio files and made it into a private podcast for him to listen to when he's older. And I think that that is the future of audio creation is that people will have multiple podcasts under their sort of name or their page for different audiences or different parts of their life.

WHITNEY Oh, I love that. You know, I remember someone saying, you talking about having the audio clips for your son and someone's-

MOLLY Mm-hmm.

WHITNEY Saying, because we're, we do a lot of family history and, and this idea of you, you have all these stories around your grandmother for example, but you know, you don't have any recording of her speaking and how, what a gift that would be is, you know, for your children or your grandchildren, their grandchildren, to be able to hear their great

grandmother speaking and what her voice sounded like. And I think, you know, going to forward that's going to be different. But even now, taking that moment and I, a couple of years ago, I actually interviewed my mom so that I would have on record and have her talk about her work history. And, what it was like to be working, you know, in the 60s and 70s and so I just loved that idea of, of creating those capsules of, of memories for, for your son who will just probably love that so much.

MOLLY I mean, my kids better like podcasts I feel like it's like the family business. They better be listening to these podcasts.

WHITNEY Exactly. All right. So, question for you. I think I, you know, I have to take advantage of this huge opportunity. You're The Podcast Whisperer, you are an expert in podcasting. So, and just so that everybody knows I did give her a little bit of heads up so she's smart. But I don't want her to be awkward, so she's going to give me a couple of suggestions on what we could do to make our podcast better because of course we're all about disrupting ourselves and that's stepping back from who we are to slingshot who into who we can be. So Molly, what are a couple of suggestions that have for us that we could do differently and or better?

MOLLY Okay. So for someone to tell you three things you are doing well and ended up going to tell you one thing that you could be doing better.

WHITNEY Okay. Perfect.

MOLLY The first thing that you're doing well is that you're asking for feedback from an expert. You know, you are talking to someone that knows what they're doing when they ask you for feedback. Many people, including me, struggle with getting feedback from an expert, and this is super top of mind for me I just got off a sales call that I was talking to a company and on that sales call I had my sales coach right there on the call with me on mute and once the client or the potential client got off the call, my sales coach told me exactly what I did right and exactly what I did wrong. And it's super hard to hear feedback, but that's how everybody gets better.

So you are already doing that by asking for feedback, so thank you.

WHITNEY Oh, and I love that you have a sales coach. That's super cool. Okay, keep going.

MOLLY I do. Number two, you also asked me as the guest to come prepared with them some specific stories. This is different than asking someone, "Hey, here are the questions I'm going to ask you." If you ask a guest, "Hey, come with stories about disruption. Come with stories about how you got to where you are." What happens is that people naturally weave those stories into the answers to your questions and stories is what makes a podcast. It's not someone-

WHITNEY Mm-hmm.

MOLLY Giving super general advice, it's somebody telling you, everyone who's listened to this podcast so far, I bet the thing that they took away from it is that my dad cried and that I made \$50,000 that is probably what's sticking out to them because those are the stories. They're not going to remember this other sort of stuff that I'm saying, but that's okay. Stories are what change the world. So you as the host asked me to come with stories and that's made this podcast better.

WHITNEY Hmm.

MOLLY The third thing that you've done is you know that a podcast doesn't stand on its own. Podcasts are usually part of a larger content marketing strategy. It's very hard to have a podcast that starts with no audience and no external branding for the host and have that podcast become as successful as it can be. A podcast is launched in conjunction with active social feeds, an active email list, perhaps a project like a book or a speaking tour. It's too much pressure on a podcast if you start it and want it to instantly be generating revenue-

WHITNEY Hmm.

MOLLY And to have a be the keystone of your content. It's part of the mix until it becomes popular enough that you can monetize and move it from the end of the wheel to the center of the wheel. So think of podcasts as part of the content marketing, not *the* content marketing, and you are doing that correct.

WHITNEY Great advice.

MOLLY Here's my last tip on how I think you can be doing better. Now I've this, I'm just being a guest on the show right now. I don't know what kind of follow-up that you are going to have, but what I hope that you do is that you pre-write social posts for me. So that you take my headshot, you take some copy and some like relevant tweets from this conversation and you send them to me, "Hey, here's what you can post on social, here's some graphics resized, here's the exact language and copy with the headshots." All I have to do is copy and paste it and I have no excuse not to. And what I would love to see, because I know you have big name guests on the show that you are asking people upfront, especially if they're approaching you, "Hey I would love to have you on our show. Would you be able to do some promotion after the episode comes out?" Because that's how your show will grow Whitney, you have already done a fantastic job getting the show in front of people that are already following you. Now you need to make sure that you're being very strategic about the guests that you're inviting on because when this episode drops, I will have shared it with my social feeds. Hopefully my audience will be coming and listening to this episode. They're not, they think they're coming for me, but they're really coming to fall in love with your show. And the smart questions and the way that you're approaching asking them and that's how you get them to listen to other episodes that you've done.

WHITNEY Hmm.

MOLLY So your best marketing strategy is guests making the guests, you know, promise or agree to promote and then running the promotion for them.

WHITNEY Okay. Are you there still?

MOLLY I'm there and I'm thinking about, okay. I'm sure that she is writing those tweets right now for me to promote. But that's another thing. I have one more little tip for you that can be helpful is when someone like me is on your show that you know that I'm a fan of your show naturally doing some call outs in the episode to other episodes of your show that someone might like. So for example, an episode of your show that I really loved as a listener was the episode with Julie, who is the author that had an idea for a book. Am sure you'll link in the show notes. She had an idea for a book and then she-

WHITNEY Yeah Julie Berry.

MOLLY Went out. Yes Julie Berry - she just went out and started shopping it and then the book got picked up and that's the spirit I want someone listening to bring to podcasting. They

have an idea for a show I'm telling you how to do it, they just go out and start the podcast. So if you've enjoyed this episode, you should also be listening to Whitney's episode with Julie Berry it brings that same spirit of like, can do to creation.

WHITNEY

Oh Molly, I am grinning from ear to ear. This is so valuable and I just, I love it and I love that you called out the episode with Julie Berry and you're making me think, and I'm going to follow your lead, is we had an episode with [Claire Diaz-Ortiz](#) who talked a lot about social media and what to do around social media and building your brand. And so if you're enjoying this conversation with Molly and you're thinking about, "Okay, now I've got this podcast." I needed to get it out there you'll want to go back and listen to that episode with Claire. So thank you for taking the time to, to analyze-

MOLLY

Perfect.

WHITNEY

And give us this feedback. Really appreciate it. All right. Just a few more questions to wrap up. One is you had mentioned that you have pivoted from individual to corporate. Tell us more about what that, what that looks like.

MOLLY

Yeah, it's really an exciting, really an exciting time. So what's happening is that businesses are becoming incredibly remote and they, they might not come back together ever or for quite some time. And we have always had as a feature on Messy Password Production it was part of our normal plans and, you know, we had some users using it. Comcast was an early user of it, but I just sort of thought of it as one of our features. And then when everything started happening with remote workplaces, I started to think, how can Messy be a resource for these teams that are now so distributed and what can we do? We already know podcasting has some advantages in that people in different time zones, people can record without needing to like look, "perfect".

You can listen to the content on your own time. How can Messy fit into a new world order of communication? And I really started to drill down on private podcasts for enterprises, not just the podcast where internal comms is talking about what would be in an employee newsletter and going out to the whole company, but also team leads, the VP of sales talking to the sales team about what's the focus for this week, the CTO, answering questions from employees in a really informal way that takes the place of the lunch and learn. An intern talking about their experience at the company as a starter and what they are noticing with fresh eyes at someone that's been there for 10 years might not have noticed.

So we decided to sort of test this idea I went out to a bunch of people that I know at large companies and said, "Hey, would this be interesting to you?" And their response was awesome, and I realized I was onto something that maybe could really be exciting for us. And so, you know, as a startup, as you know, we're all about disruption. So met with my team, we talked through how to make sure our website is communicating that well. How can we make sure on the packages page that that is very well thought out. And sort of the nice thing for us is we're not changing the product at all. We did not build a single new feature. We're just going after a different audience and it's been really exciting and I feel like I'm offering something to my users that they can't get anywhere else and that is helping their team to stay connected and, I feel like I'm doing some small part to make sure that people aren't getting totally lost in the shuffle.

WHITNEY

Hmm. So good. So it reminds me, we had [Alex Osterwalder](#) on the podcast not too long ago who's written a book on business model innovation and you know, sold over, I think two million books. And this is such a great example of you. The product is the same, but you've innovated around your business model and who you're selling it to and what job people are hiring it to do. And it sounds like from what you're saying, it's going really well because it's doing a very important job, which is allowing people to be

connected and, and have a sense of who their coworkers are when they can't necessarily see them in person and touch them and have that, that those conversations live.

MOLLY Yeah. And also how can we make sure that employees are always hungry to learn new skills? Audio is the future. We already know that employees know how to write, they're doing internal blogs, they're writing long emails. Now we make sure that employees are knowing how to communicate their ideas strongly in audio, which is a skill that helps you on conference calls, on public speaking. I'm starting to do more thought leadership to a wider audience. It's a way for employees to learn skills, which is we know that an employee that is learning new skills, you know, going through that S Curve as an engaged employee.

WHITNEY Hmm. All right. So was there ever a moment, I mean we talked about you know, that low moment when you first graduated from college, but as an entrepreneur, has there ever been a moment where you just wanted to quit? You're just like, "Oh, what am I doing?"

MOLLY Yeah.

WHITNEY And what did you do? How did you, how did you battle through it?

MOLLY Hmm. Well, I guess just in the interest of transparency, I feel like I have those moments fairly often, but they're short-lived. And-

WHITNEY Oh.

MOLLY Being an entrepreneur is about making yourself feel really uncomfortable all the time. And I literally just got off the call with my sales coach and I love my sales coach. Brian is awesome, but it's really hard to hear 15 minutes of here's how you ran that call totally wrong. And that's the job that Brian's hired to do. Brian is hired to make me better at sales it's really hard.

And I think if anyone is an entrepreneur, then they've had some sort of success in the corporate world. And I was fortunate, I had a great career, you know, in the corporate world at Hearst and Venmo and Forbes and felt like I was consistently getting very positive feedback from people that I worked with. And as an entrepreneur, it's a lot of getting feedback that is not all positive. It's a lot of potential investors telling, you know, it's a lot of, I do the customer service, it's people that are, their credit card was declined and they think it's a problem on Messy's end.

It's a lot of people saying, "Hey, you should be doing this better." And that's really hard for me - I'm a sensitive person, but I will tell you that something I do every day at six o'clock I don't miss it, is I run on my treadmill for two miles while I am running. I blast the song "I Am a Champion" by Carrie Underwood and Ludacris. And I usually, honestly, I cry while I'm doing that. It just feel-

WHITNEY Oh.

MOLLY Better and I go really fast and then when I get off it I'm like, okay, back to work. And I know that it's hard to be an entrepreneur, but man, I would not do anything else. It is such a gift to be able to live in a time where someone like me can run a company and hopefully do their part to change the world. What a gift.

WHITNEY Oh. You just made me cry. I just have this image of you and like rocky and climbing those stairs and the, the Carrie Underwood and Ludacris and so every day at six o'clock, six o'clock at night, is that right? Not in the morning?

MOLLY Yeah six o'clock at night. Mm-hmm. Not in the morning-

WHITNEY You get on the treadmill-

MOLLY In the morning we got too many stuff to do, yup. I do it at six o'clock.

WHITNEY Two miles and you run. Oh, that is so inspiring Molly. And so what you're saying is like you have those low moments and it's not necessarily one low moment that that sort of valley, that's that sort of for an extended period of time. There's lots of valleys and you just have this mental discipline to say, "Okay, this is hard, but I'm doing this because this is important and I have a vision and I'm going to go get on that treadmill. I'm going to run, I'm going to get those endorphins and I'm going to keep going." And that is, , you know, I have to say, I hope your dad listened to this because you know what, as a parent I would say that this is what makes me cry is to hear that kind of discipline and that willingness to just keep going. Yeah, \$50,000 is great, but what's better as a parent, when you see a child who knows how to work, the universe loves effort and you know how to put in the effort. And I think it is super impressive Molly.

MOLLY Thanks. Well, I try to think that I'm not crying because I'm doing it wrong I'm crying because I'm trying so hard to do it right.

WHITNEY Yeah. Oh, I love that. Okay. So Molly, where can people find you?

MOLLY Oh, I love when people find me. They can find me on social media I'm M-S-M-O-L-L-Y B-E-C-K. That's Ms. Molly Beck and I am Ms. Molly back on all platforms and I link off to Messy on all of my social feeds so you can easily find Messy from there. I also, my email address is Molly@messy.fm. We didn't talk about it in this podcast, but I actually wrote a book all about email called *Reach Out*. So I am very on top of my email. If anyone wants to email me, I feel like it's very off-brand. If I don't respond to an email. And I'm always interested in hearing from people about questions they have or things I could help with or potential partnerships or they're interested in using one of our services, please don't hesitate to reach out.

WHITNEY Okay. Love it. All right. And so, excuse me. So before we got on the line, I asked you if you would be willing to do this and I am so excited. So everyone who is listening, The Podcast Whisper is in the house and she has agreed to do whisper into one of your ears. And so what we're going to do is we're going to do a giveaway. And, the way that this giveaway is going to work is that you are going to, how should we have them do it? Molly, let's figure this out. How should we have people be eligible for the giveaway? Because we don't want to necessarily-

MOLLY Yeah.

WHITNEY And we're talking live on air everybody. So we're figuring this out as we go. We don't want them necessarily just to send an email directly to me. Do we want them to leave a podcast review? Do we want them to, should we do that?

MOLLY Yeah.

WHITNEY I mean this is-

MOLLY Very on brand. Lets do it.

WHITNEY Okay. Alright. So we're going to have them leave a podcast review. Have you all, if you're interested, leave a podcast review for this episode and tell us what you liked about the episode. And then you can either in the review or you can email me at wj@whitneyjohnson.com and say, "I want to be eligible, I want to start a podcast., can I, you know, basically throw my hat in the ring because I want the Podcast Whisper to help me figure out what we're going to do." And then tell me who you are a little bit about who you are and where you work or what you do. And then we will choose someone and you will get to spend 15 or 20 minutes with Molly figuring out what your podcast is going to be. So that'll-

MOLLY Yeah.

WHITNEY Be super fun.

MOLLY And, also I will say if you already have a podcast, but you're looking for advice about how to grow it or how to monetize it, happy to help with either of those things. So if you are someone that is in the early stages of developing a podcast, you already have one and you want to market it better or you're ready to monetize, you are eligible for this giveaway. So leave a review for Whitney's Podcast, shoot her an email that says, "Hey, I left a review and I want to be eligible." And I would love to talk to you whether you're inside a company or outside, I'm here for you.

WHITNEY Oh, I love it. This is going to be so fun. All right, so last two questions. First one is what is a podcast that has impacted you and or if I'm going to use a little bit of hyperbole, potentially changed your life, what's, what's one of those podcasts?

MOLLY The podcast that will change my life is the one that a listener who is thinking about the idea right now is going to start the podcast. I will change. My life hasn't been created yet and it's up to you, listener to create it.

WHITNEY Mic drop. I have no other questions for you. Molly Beck that was amazing. Thank you for joining us.

MOLLY Thank you so much. It was so wonderful Whitney what an enjoyable way to spend the afternoon and thank you so much.

I'm so inspired by Molly's creativity and tenacity and willingness to disrupt herself throughout her career. Though it was clearly difficult to graduate and enter the job market in the middle of the last recession, the skills and flexibility she learned in that time has directly led her to what she is doing today. I loved that she has the mindset to say that where she is now may not be where she ends up, but that doesn't stop her from moving forward. And we're thinking a lot about the generous advice that Molly gave us. If you've been listening to the podcast for a while, you know we've experimented with different formats like our live coaching episodes (for example Episode 96 with next week's returning guest Ryan Gottfredson) and the solo episodes that are deep dives into the accelerants of disruption (the most recent-Episode 160 on Battling Entitlement). And we'll continue to experiment, whether mini-seasons or taking a more topical approach. And wasn't it interesting that the average podcast has 124 listeners. When we can see everyone's social media followers, we might have the misconception that if we don't have thousands of people following us, we shouldn't start something new like a podcast, but that's just not true. If you have a topic you want to share-now is the time to start. Finally, I love how Molly is thinking through how her company can be of service to other companies figuring out how to have a distributed workforce. Audio can help employees

feel connected when so many are working from home and it can be used to help your people stay engaged with their individual S-Curve of Learning. Her willingness to be discovery-driven will no doubt continue to serve Molly well as she grows this unique company.

And a reminder, if you're thinking of starting a podcast, especially if you're within an organization, take advantage of this opportunity to consult with Molly. Leave us a rating and written review on Apple Podcasts and then send an email atwj@whitneyjohnson.com with a screenshot and a little bit about the podcast you're thinking about starting. Don't worry about there being enough slots. What I've found is that there are usually more than you think there are. Thank you again to Molly Beck for being our guest, thank you to sound engineer Whitney Jobe, producer Melissa Rutty, managers Sarah Duran and Macy Robison, content contributors Virginia Kivlighan, Jennifer Richardson and Nancy Wilson.

I'm Whitney Johnson And this is Disrupt Yourself.