

Disrupt Yourself Podcast

EPISODE 288: BECKY ROBINSON

Welcome back to the Disrupt Yourself podcast, where we provide strategies and advice on how to climb the S Curve of Learning in your professional and personal life, disrupting who you are now to slingshot into who you want to be. I'm your host, Whitney Johnson. This week, I'm talking with Becky Robinson, the CEO and founder of Weaving Influence, a marketing agency that specializes in book launches and PR. Becky is very special to me because I was one of her very first clients, and I had the privilege of writing the foreword for her new book, which is called *Reach*. In it, she codifies ten years of wisdom she's gained in working with brilliant thought leaders from the business world, including many people you've heard on this podcast. It provides a very smart framework for building lasting, sustainable influence, both online and off. If you have value to offer the world, Becky knows how to find the audience for it. Even if you're not sure where to start. Note that she didn't go to business school or work for years at marketing agencies. She left the workforce to become a full-time parent while her kids were young. Then she made the enormous S Curve leap to start her own business. And as she'll tell you, it was hard. But Becky walks the talk, which is one of the many reasons she's been so successful. Again, this conversation is special for me because it allowed both of us to reflect on the journey of the last ten years.

Whitney Johnson: So, Becky, share with us a formative story so that people have a sense of who you are and why you wrote the book that you're going to tell us about in just a minute.

Becky Robinson: I would love to tell a story about working with you, Whitney. So, I had been doing social media marketing and supporting an author, and people began coming to me to ask me if I would do it for them. And, you know, nothing was really compelling until Jesse Lyn Stoner introduced me to you. And when I began to work with you, I remember it so clearly. We would meet on the phone, maybe on GoTo Meeting on camera, but I think on the phone, and we were strategizing for the launch of your first book, *Dare, Dream, Do*. And the vision I originally had for my business was that I would be a strategic consultant to give people book marketing ideas. But what I found

out when I worked with you, Whitney, is that even though my ideas were helpful to you, what you really needed was hands-on help to execute the plans that we were co-creating. So, working with you was super formative because it's what compelled me to first seek out team members who could implement the work because I didn't have enough time to both create the ideas and implement all the ideas.

Whitney Johnson: Wow. So, I did not realize that. That is so, isn't it funny how like you can both have an experience, and you have different, you both experience it differently? Because I thought when we started working together. So, again, thank you, Jesse Lyn, for introducing us. I thought that you would already started your business. And what you're saying is you were kind of freelancing, and you had just you had been at home. And I want to have you share a little bit of this back story if you would. Is that you'd been at home parenting your children full time, and we're starting to on-ramp and just talk about that briefly. But I didn't realize that it was our work together that got you to say, I'm going to turn this into a business where we execute as well.

Becky Robinson: Sure, I'd be glad to share more details about that. So, I had stepped out of the workforce in about 2001 when my first child was born. I went on to have two more children, and I basically was home with the kids, homeschooling, you know, taking care of our family and our home until 2009, when I started to explore reentering the workplace. So, in 2009, I got some freelance writing opportunities, some freelance social media marketing opportunities, and from there eventually took an employee position working for a leadership consultant who was launching a book. So, that's where I really got exposed to how do you use social media and other digital marketing to help bring a business book into the world. And that was when I started to attract some attention from people on Twitter who saw what I was doing. But it really was Whitney working with you when I saw this could be an opportunity bigger than me, I could create a company bigger than me. And so, in the time that I was serving you, I believe your book came out in May of 2012. And so, I was starting to form my team. I still did have a job as someone else's employee, and I remember conversations with you, Whitney, when I would say, Well, do you think I could take the leap? Do you think I could do the business full time and not have this fallback of an employee like a paycheck, a steady paycheck? And it was that kind of wrestling through that with you and the inspiration of watching you and, and the title of your book, *Dare, Dream, Do*, which really, you know, gave me a vision of trying something big. I actually have team members, contractors, who are still working with me today that I hired during that formative time. And they remember that you were the first project that, that they worked on. So, one of my team members, Carrie Koens, she remembers to this day that I gave her my email password so that she could log into my email and connect with Barnes Noble stores to try to find placement and opportunities for your book.

Whitney Johnson: I love it. That is so fun. And you know, what's really fun about this, Becky, is that we're basically at the ten-year anniversary, right?

Becky Robinson: Yes, of my company.

Whitney Johnson: 2022, yeah.

Becky Robinson: And your book.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah. Oh, so fun. So, your company and *Dare, Dream, Do*, were both born at the same time.

Becky Robinson: Yes.

Whitney Johnson: They're twins!

Becky Robinson: And, and one was born because of the other, Whitney. So, let's not miss that, if not for your book and your, you know, having faith in me. I still remember and I don't know if this is safe to share or not, but I remember being on the phone with you one day and we were talking about pricing and business. And you said to me, Becky, you are going to tell people that you charge \$300 an hour, and I'm going to tell them that you are worth every penny. And I have never, ever forgotten the faith that you had in me. And remember, this is when I had been previously freelancing for \$30 an hour, as I was beginning to learn social media marketing back in 2009.

Whitney Johnson: Wow. So, you know, it's just so fun to reflect on that. I was not expecting us to have this conversation this morning, but it's really fun to reflect on. That was a really special, lovely time, I think, for both of us. Anyway, I love that. So, I was telling you to ten X, and you did, which is the best part ever.

Becky Robinson: Indeed, and beyond.

Whitney Johnson: That brings us forward to today. Let's just fast forward ten years and talk about what do you do today. And tell us about some of the authors that, you know, how many over these past ten years, how many authors you've worked with, some of the authors that you've worked with, and just give us a high-level overview of what your business has become.

Becky Robinson: Sure, I would be glad to. So, you know, we really have stayed where we started, which is in the niche of business books. Over the past ten years, we've launched more than 150 business books. And what I mean by launching the books is partnering with the authors to identify the digital marketing strategies and media relations strategies that would best support them and providing hands-on support to do that. We've worked with authors like Ken Blanchard, Mark Miller, who's the vice president of high-performance leadership at Chick-fil-A, Sheryl Batchelder, she's now on the board at Chick-fil-A. But previously, when we worked with her, she was a CEO at Popeyes, and she engineered this massive turnaround of their stock prices by implementing servant leadership and then wrote a book about it. You know, we've worked with I'm trying to think who else? Just so many amazing business leadership authors, including you, Whitney. I believe we also worked on *Disrupt Yourself* the first time I launched it. What's been amazing, too, is just the teachers and what I've learned about being a good leader by partnering with and working on such projects. I'm almost always amazed by what I learn from watching the thought leaders and authors who we are serving.

Whitney Johnson: It sounds like something popped into your mind. What's a lesson that you learned from someone?

Becky Robinson: Well, I was thinking about a recent book that we worked on. So, we worked on a new book called *Team Emotional Intelligence 2.0* by Jean Greaves and Evan Watkins. Jean also wrote this massive New York Times best-selling book, *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, with Travis Bradberry. And I happened to be helping Jean and Evan launch their book right around the time of the Uvalde shootings. And one of the things they talk about in *Team Emotional Intelligence 2.0* is just the importance of being aware of the way. It's not only about that each individual team member needs to increase their emotional intelligence, but you need to be aware of the emotions on the team and how they influence the work that you're doing together. And when we did the launch, one of the things that they said is that you have to make space as a team to grieve. And it was during that week that the shooting happened. And, you know, certainly, any organization is made up of people, and people bring emotions to work. And it was such a reminder to me to pay attention to how my team might be experiencing the bigger things that were happening in the world.

Whitney Johnson: One of the things that I'm hearing you say is that you could, if you wanted to, you could catalog all of the books that you've worked on. How many books have you worked on now?

Becky Robinson: More than 150.

Whitney Johnson: Okay. So, you could take every single book that you've worked on and probably distill a lesson learned from each of those books and how it helped your business grow and evolve.

Becky Robinson: Yes, and not only like the books, but also the people who wrote the books. I'm thinking about Pam McLean. So, Pam had been for many years the CEO of the Hudson Institute of Coaching. And one of the things that I'll never forget that she said is, "your presence is the intervention." So, as a leader, your presence is so powerful. And I can just picture Pam. I assume that's in her book. I'm not positive that I read the entire book if I'm honest, but it's the books and the people.

Whitney Johnson: Wow. You're. That made me cry, Becky. Your presence is the intervention. And it applies at work. It applies at home. It applies anywhere. And is just a reminder of the importance of, of showing up when you

say you will. Because it does intervene, and things shift because you were there or not there. Is there anything that you've observed, Becky, about marketing for people who are in underrepresented groups versus represented groups? Has there been any nuance that you've noticed? Any trends or patterns?

Becky Robinson: One of the key aspects for someone who may come from a marginalized identity is to be able to have, have the support of, of your network in a more powerful way. So, one of the people I quoted in my book is Natalie Nixon. She's an African American woman who wrote this amazing book about creativity. And she talked about the challenge of even getting a foot in the door with a traditional publisher, how she tried for months and months and months. And finally, when she was able to break through and ended up getting a book contract. It was because of an introduction from someone else. And so, I think those of us who have connections need to be as generous as possible in order to amplify the work of people who might come from a marginalized identity, but not from a place of, of better than, more of humbly recognizing that we have privilege, and being able to make a way for someone else.

Whitney Johnson: Hmm. That's really powerful. So, one of the things I heard you say is that not better than just recognizing from humility the privilege. And that if you are in a underrepresented group and you, you describe it as marginalized identity, is that the power your network becomes even more important because you're not necessarily going to be given a pass. You're going to have to galvanize your network in behalf of you making progress.

Becky Robinson: Yes. And you have to be willing to ask for help. You know, I've heard Natalie speak about this a couple of times. She did a keynote speech at a conference I organized last week. And so, I heard her story with different ears this time. And what I heard was she very nearly gave up. You know, she had wanted to publish traditionally. She wasn't finding those opportunities. And so, she almost said, well, my ideas don't matter. Well, of course, her ideas matter. Her voice deserves to be heard. And she's, you know, amazing and capable, of course. So, it was just, you know, you have to be willing to if you do come from an underrepresented group to ask for help, which also requires humility, I'm sure. But I'm so glad because her book has had more opportunities as a result of her waiting for the traditional publishing deal.

Whitney Johnson: You talk about the influence gap. Can you describe what that is?

Becky Robinson: The influence gap is what happens when we don't show up online and offline in the same way. And for a long time, I've emphasized the part about showing up online in the same powerful way that you show up in real life. But what I'm beginning to realize now on my own journey with my book is that there's also that danger if you don't show up in person in the same powerful way that you show up online. So, in the book, I describe four quadrants of influence that you could have related to your influence online and offline. So, what you could be is a beginning beginner. And if you are a beginning beginner, as it relates to whatever key area of thought leadership you want to promote, you have neither offline experience or online traction. And most of us, if we're beginning this path to become a thought leader, are in that place of beginning beginner. Even if we're not a beginner in our career. The goal then is to begin to contribute value in online spaces and offline spaces at once. What I've often noticed is that the people I work with, when they have a book, they already have that offline expertise. So, they're what I would call a traditional thought leader, someone who's had a great career in their corporation, at their university, in whatever way they might have been working. But they have not chosen to cultivate an online presence that equally represents the value that they bring to offline spaces. So, I can think of an example, an amazing guy, Dr. Kim Cameron from the University of Michigan. I worked on one of his books, I think, last year, and Kim said to me, You know, I haven't chosen to build an online brand. It hasn't been part of my journey.

Becky Robinson: And there's no shame in that. He has had extensive impact through his ideas. But in order to create the biggest possible reach for your ideas, what you need to do is to choose to show up in online spaces in the same way that you show up offline, which is what a true reach expert does. So, when I think about you, Whitney, you, of course, fall into that category. You have both cultivated your offline work, and you show up with people in person, and you show up in real life. In the book, I share a story of Karin Hurt. So, Karin, back in the time that I met her around 2010 or 11, she was an executive at Verizon. She was doing tremendously good work, and she didn't have an online presence yet. So, she had decided that she would start to write blog posts to scale the ideas that she was sharing with her team at Verizon. And unexpectedly, from there, she was able to build a following, people listening to her ideas about leadership and organizational culture, and at some point, even left her job at Verizon to

do thought leadership and consulting and speaking and training full time. So, Karin Hurt is another example in the book that I use of someone who crossed over from that traditional thought leadership to being a true reach expert. I've noticed about myself that I have likely given way more attention over the past decade to my online presence, potentially, sometimes at the neglect of my in-person and especially my local presence. And I felt that so keenly when I had a book signing event at a local bookstore and virtually no one showed up.

Whitney Johnson: Oh, no.

Becky Robinson: I showed up.

Whitney Johnson: I was going to ask you, what are some lessons you learned? It sounds like this is one of them.

Becky Robinson: Well, yes. I mean, I showed up, but no one else showed up. And, you know, what I haven't done is I haven't networked locally. I haven't gone to local events. I haven't made the time for in-person friendships in my local area. And so, as a result, when, when something big happens, like, you know, a book signing at a local library, I felt reluctant to invite people. I didn't probably invite as many as I should or personally reach out to as many people as I should. And so, I, I left that day feeling like almost like I failed the bookstore owner because it was my job to bring people. And I didn't. And so, I've been thinking lately about, is there a new way that I need to cultivate my own in-person presence so that I can be the true reach expert that I want to be.

Whitney Johnson: So interesting.

Whitney Johnson: So, on your journey, you started by really coaching and launching these books of people who had a fairly robust offline presence, and you were helping them establish an online presence. And through the journey of this book, you've discovered that it goes both ways. So, there are people who can have very strong online presences, but what they're working on now, and I think people who have been solely online, is how do they then, when you meet them in person, also have a very strong, compelling offline presence so that people aren't disappointed, right?

Becky Robinson: Yes. And I think the pandemic likely has made that more challenging because we have pulled in, you know, to stay home, you know, not going out as much. And so, whatever difficulty there may have been has been exacerbated by the pandemic. And as people are starting to emerge from the pandemic, it becomes even more important to show up in person with people.

Whitney Johnson: So, you're looking to close that gap between online and offline, regardless of where you where you've started, whether you've started offline, whether you've started online. How do you close that gap?

Becky Robinson: Yes. And when you do close that gap, then you position yourself to create the biggest possible reach for your work. And to be clear, I define reach as expanding audience plus lasting impact. You know, I think that it's those in-person relationships which potentially position us to have the most significant lasting impact. And so, we not only want to attract a wider audience for the work that we do in the world, but we also want to ensure that there will be meaning over time.

Whitney Johnson: One of your quotes in the book is Viral is not the goal. So, can you state that what you define? Reach out one more time for people so they can really hear it, because I think it's very, very compelling.

Becky Robinson: Sure. Reach is expanding audience plus lasting impact.

Whitney Johnson: So, it's a both and.

Becky Robinson: Yes, you know, with viral, you may attract a lot of attention at once and get a lot of eyeballs on something, whether it's a Tik Tok video or a YouTube video, or an Instagram post. But that can be very forgettable. It's, it's an instant in time. And true reach really is about adding value to the world in a way that can stand the test of time where, you know, your ideas and contributions are making an actual difference in the lives of the audience that you're growing. So, the four possibilities as it relates to online influence are being a beginning beginner where you don't have that real-life expertise, nor do you have a strong online presence. You might also be a master of branding

where you nail your online presence, but there's little substance beneath it. You could be a traditional thought leader. So, traditional thought leaders are people who have cultivated massive influence in their offline lives, but they haven't adequately represented that in online spaces. And a true reach expert is someone who shows up online in the same powerful way that they show up in real life.

Whitney Johnson: So, what are the four commitments that you talk about?

Becky Robinson: Before I talk about the four commitments, I have to tell you about the power of an editor as it relates to shaping a book because, in my first draft, these four commitments were called the four factors. And I always laugh like, you know, I think those of us who are writers, we fall in love with our own writing. We think our ideas are the best. And then when an editor steps in and puts the polish, it's like 100 times better. So, just a shout out to my editor, Neil Mallett, for changing and calling these the four commitments instead of the four factors.

Becky Robinson: So, the four commitments. So, what I observed in working with authors over time is that there were four commitments that these authors made that allowed them to create bigger reach for their ideas. And they may seem simple, but I think that as we remember them and rely on them, we'll be more successful in our work. So, the first one is value. You know, you're not going to be able to create reach unless you bring ideas of value. One thing to remember is that value is perceived differently by people. So, your audience is the one that determines the value. And I like to tell a story of, you know, recently in my life, my youngest daughter was diagnosed with autism. She's 15. And so, whereas three years ago, when autism wasn't on my radar, I might see a thought leader podcasting about autism. That would not be of value to me. And so, depending upon your needs, your interests, then you'll decide that a certain author or thought leader has value.

Becky Robinson: But the first commitment is one to show up with value. The second commitment is to consistency, and this is the one that people struggle with the most because to be consistent in sharing value in online spaces costs something. So, Whitney, I'm going to shout out your consistency over 260 episodes of your podcast, a weekly newsletter that shows up reliably. Like that, significant consistency costs you something, it costs you time, it costs you energy, it costs you money. People really resist the idea of consistency, but consistency builds trust, and you can't create reach unless people know that, that you're there providing value to them. So, first, you start with value. You show up with that value consistently. And the third thing is you show up over time. I like to use the example of Brené Brown. I don't know her personally. I know you do, Whitney. And I think a lot of people look at Brené, and they think that when she had that viral TED Talk Back around 2012, that was what instantly propelled her to the reach that she currently enjoys. The truth is she was writing and researching and contributing value with consistency for more than a decade before that viral TEDx Talk. And she has continued to show up with value consistently since that time. And so, the only way that we can create the true reach that we want to be willing to take a long-term view. And Whitney, I think even your journey demonstrates that, you know, you didn't have the traction when you released *Dare, Dream, Do* that you have today.

Becky Robinson: And it's only because of the commitments that you made to showing up with value consistently that your number eight on the Thinker's 50. You know, it's not something that happens overnight, and it's hard one for anyone. So, the fourth commitment, which I think is often unexpected, is the commitment to generosity. And I talk in my book about David Cooperrider. David Cooperrider is the founder of an organizational development approach called Appreciative Inquiry. And the idea came out of his doctoral dissertation back in the eighties. And David made this important decision that he wouldn't copyright his ideas. Instead, he would set his ideas free for anyone to use. And so, as a result, consultants and nonprofits, and corporations all over the world have used David's ideas, and his ideas have expanded far beyond they could have expanded if he had wanted to control and copyright them. And for those of us who may have ideas that aren't going to expand, like Appreciative Inquiry did, really, the only way to create massive reach or to get more reach is to give away as much of our content and thought leadership as we can. So, that means sometimes, you know, of course, our podcasts are free, our blog posts are free, but showing up with that value to give it away. And even as authors, I think the more books we give away, the more books go out into the world and potentially the larger reach we can create with them. So, generosity is critical.

Whitney Johnson: All right. So, you have value, consistency, over time, generosity.

Becky Robinson: Yeah. And over time, longevity is the name of that commitment.

Whitney Johnson: Longevity. Okay. All right. So, one of the things that you said that really stood out for me is this idea of consistency builds trust. When we're consistent, we trust people. That was really, really important, I think, on a number of fronts. You also talk in the book about Bev Kaye and Julie Winkle Giulioni, people that a lot of people probably haven't heard of. Can you just talk about them briefly?

Becky Robinson: Sure, I would love to. So, when I met Julie, it was with the launch of her book, also in 2012. She was one of the first authors that we served. And when I met Julie, she did not have an online presence yet. So, it was at the time that she was partnering with Bev Kaye, who was a more established thought leader in career development spaces, that Julie decided to make these commitments to show up with value. So, I've watched Julie over the last decade. You know, Julie writes articles in various publications related to her topics. She's built genuine relationships with others in her field. You know, she's had opportunities to speak. She's used social media to connect with people. And you know what's amazing about that is that this book, *Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go*, across the past ten years, has been amongst the books that I've promoted that sold the most. And yet, you know, Julie or Bev don't necessarily have a household name. What I think about is that, you know, most of us will never have the household names or be famous, but we can become known to the people that we're adding value to. And it can create tremendous results for us in our lives and in our businesses. And so, I like to think about Julie and Bev, you know, as a model of, you know, people who aren't famous but who are making a big difference and having lasting impact with an audience that's growing.

Whitney Johnson: So, someone comes to you and says, I've written a book. What are the first three questions you ask them, and what advice do you provide to them where they say, I want to work with you? What do you ask them to find out if it's going to be a fit?

Becky Robinson: Sure. Well, the first thing I always want to ask authors is, and I think I might have gotten this question from you, Whitney, what's the job you want this book to do for you in the world? So, basically, I want to find out what is their big why. And the reason is because, you know, people write books for all different kinds of reasons. But understanding what the bigger picture goal is can really help me in recommending a path forward and can also really help me know if someone is going to be a fit to work with me or not.

Whitney Johnson: So, just for our listeners, that comes from the jobs to be done theory, which Clayton Christensen popularized, it's that basically whenever you buy a product, you're hiring it to do a functional job and an emotional job. And when you're thinking about a book, you want to ask yourself the question, What job am I hiring this book to do, what functional job am I hiring it to do, and what emotional job? So, if you think about functional job, you might say, well, I'm writing this book because I want to codify what I think. I want to be able to have a calling card when I'm trying to develop new business. That, those can be the functional jobs. I want to make money even though people don't usually make money on your books. Everybody just FYI. But then the emotional job is that you want to find your voice. You want to feel like you've created something that will have a legacy. And oftentimes, the ego is involved, and you want a book to be a best seller of some sort or another. In part because you know that a best seller is an indicator that it will have more reach. But there's also a piece of just wouldn't it be really fun to be on a list, right? We do that. And so that's part of the emotional job. That's what would you add to that, Becky, as you think about the functional emotional jobs of your book? Actually, let me, let me turn that on you.

Becky Robinson: Yeah. Well, I mean, I think the, the emotional job that I see a lot of authors bring is just that desire to accomplish something. So, it's almost like the kind of the bucket list item of, you know, this is something I've always wanted to do since I was a child. And I think for me, from the time I started my business and I partnered with authors, I had this deep longing to write a book. So, the emotional need was like, I've always envisioned this. You know, I've always wanted to walk into a bookstore and see my book on the shelf where I've always wanted to be able to say that I'm an author. That's the emotional job for me. The functional job really had to do with putting my ideas into a more scalable product to be able to help and reach more people. And what I've been I don't know if I've been surprised by, but I love one of the things I love about having my book Whitney When I meet with potential customers, the first thing I do is offer to send them a free copy of my book. And for those who choose to read it, I think it's a faster way for them to get to know me and my ideas and what they might expect from working with me and my team. And it really helps it, like it gives us a shared vocabulary, it gives us a shared set of understanding about what's possible. And in some ways, I think the thing that I'm constantly working to overcome with the authors

that I'm serving is. Even though I tell them that selling books is challenging, even though I tell them that it requires more time and energy, and money than they expect it will, sometimes that message just, just doesn't get through. And I think if they read my book and take that to heart, then we'll be a little farther along in terms of a reality check on what it might take.

Whitney Johnson: So, the functional job is for you anyway. You always wanted to write a book. It's something that was a deep desire in your heart. And then the functional job of codifying your ideas and then having people have it be that intellectual pheromone of Do people want to work with you and is it a good fit? All right. So, that's the first question you asked people. What are one or two other questions or piece of pieces of advice that you give to people?

Becky Robinson: Sure. Well, so one of the things I also ask people is about their own networks. And some homework I like to give authors even before we work together is to open up a spreadsheet and to write down all the possible names that they can think of, of people who could contribute to helping them launch their book. What I will sometimes do is ask people to imagine that they could throw the biggest possible party of their lives and budget and travel are not an issue. Anyone in the world can show up to the party, and no expense is spared. Who would you invite? And the other thing that I remind people of is don't decide in advance that people don't want to come to this party. I think one of the things that we often do as authors and thought leaders is we, we decide in advance who might want to help us and who might not. And instead of asking for help from a wide range of our connections, we exclude people before we even ask them. And what I've noticed is that it's sometimes the people who want to help you are not the ones you expect to be the ones to help you. So, I encourage authors really to not leave any stone unturned, but to list as many possible people as possible. Whitney, I don't know if you know Clint Pulver. Okay. He wrote a book called *I Love It Here*, and he and his wife locked themselves in a hotel room for a weekend and came up with 10,000 names of people in their network who they could tap into for the launch of Clint's book. And now most of us probably can't come up with 10,000 names, but I try to encourage authors as one of the first topics for consideration to make a list of as many people as they can. Because it really is those network connections that can help us get momentum with our ideas and our books.

Whitney Johnson: 10,000 people. Wow, that is impressive. Yeah. All right, so what job are you hiring the book to do? Imagine that you're inviting or you're throwing the biggest party of your life, who would you invite. Any third piece?

Becky Robinson: Well, I definitely always first talk to people, Whitney, about their online presence. So, one of the things I'll find out is, you know, do they have a website? You know, as we talked about the importance of showing up online in the same powerful way that you show up in real life. The first way to bridge that influence gap is to have a place that you own and control online that can adequately share the value that you're offering the world. So, I'll right away as part of the first conversations, ask authors about their websites because that is the key. First priority in building reach is that place that you own in control.

Whitney Johnson: Your home on the interweb?

Becky Robinson: Yes. And I remember working with you on yours in those early days, Whitney.

Whitney Johnson: It's evolved. Yay.

Becky Robinson: Yes.

Whitney Johnson: So, I want to double down on the re-entry because I describe it as re-entry. But I'm wondering, was it actually a re-entry or was it just a launch from a career perspective? So, just talk to us a little. Let's peel back the layers even a little bit more.

Becky Robinson: Sure. Well, Whitney, one of the things I remember about working with you early on was some of our conversations about being the ship versus being the harbor. And so, as I described, the fact that I took a step out of, you know, having a job in 2001 to be able to be at home with my family. I was making that choice to be the harbor. And, you know, really honestly, when I started this new journey, it was in a completely different realm. I

didn't ever study marketing in school. I never took a business class. I never had a business plan. And it really was this discovery driven process of, Well, what do I enjoy doing? What can I make money doing? And it was very much, you know, bootstrapped from, from the start. Where, you know, I didn't I didn't have any working capital, really. I recently wrote in a newsletter about a time, about nine months into doing my business and having a team where I had to write a personal check to the business account in order to make payroll.

Becky Robinson: And that was so scary. It was \$7,000. And if I remember correctly, I didn't really even take money out of the business for a year or two or longer. And, you know, incidentally, with COVID and a reduction in the revenue that my company had, I actually took a significant pay cut. I'll often tell people I could make more money if I went and worked for someone else. So, I guess one of the things I'd want your listeners to know is, of course, you know, launching a new career at age 40, like I did is completely possible. You know, I crafted the organization I wanted to work in with the values that I wanted to live by. You know, I really created something from nothing as it relates to my team, but there definitely have been all of these bumps and bruises along the way. And I think one of the things that's made it possible is that I've in some ways, I've prioritized the team and their well-being and building an organization that could be bigger than me. It may be at the expense of my own financial growth from the company. Now, don't get me wrong, I've experienced plenty of financial benefits and, and taken income from the company. But that's never been my be all, end all goal.

Whitney Johnson: But you don't regret it for even a nanosecond, do you?

Becky Robinson: Oh, not. Not at all, no. In fact, there's so much meaning, you know, for me, looking back over the last decade, it's those people that are that bring so much meaning to the journey. And, you know, actually allowing people to have the flexibility to care for their own lives, you know, and work doesn't have to be all consuming or, you know, people matter as people first. I hope that's what they experience when they work in my organization.

Whitney Johnson: So, the people who have the ideas and the people who execute the ideas, what I think is interesting about you and observing you over time is that you actually do both. Yes. You have people that you delegate to, and you have a team that works with. But your brain operates both in here's where I want to go and here's how I execute. That's my observation of you.

Becky Robinson: Yeah. Thank you. It's interesting to be seen that way. I think it is true. And I think there's somewhat there's danger in that. So, if I were to critique myself as a business owner over the years, I think that like where I where I've gotten stuck is where I haven't been willing to let go. And so, as a result, you know, ten years in I'm still the primary business development person that has to shift. I'm not going to be able to grow my company to where I want it to be unless I involve others in in those critical places. So, it's good that I have a vision for where I want to go. It's good that I also, you know, get involved in executing it. And a place for me to grow from here is to be able to let go of more and to get clearer about the places that only I can contribute.

Whitney Johnson: Ah, so, I was going to ask you where you are on the S Curve. And it sounds like there are some areas where you are at the top of the S Curve. And in order for your business to grow, you need to jump to some new S Curves and allow other people to move into the, the mastery phase of the S Curve. Is that accurate?

Becky Robinson: It is so accurate. So, I need to take a leap. And as it relates to making space for others, especially in this area of business development.

Whitney Johnson: I heard someone say recently, delegation isn't about getting more done. It's about helping people grow. It ultimately is. You do get more done, but you help people grow in the process. So, jumping to new S Curves isn't about necessarily or only jumping to new S Curves, it's allowing other people to climb those S Curves. This is a slightly different topic, but I think it's interesting because you've been doing remote and hybrid work for the entire span of your career. And again, I want to go back to this shout out of you are a relauncher. You were out of the workforce for ten years and decided to relaunch. And I know that we have a number of listeners who are, who have been out of the workforce. And so, I just want to come back to that because I think it's really compelling. I think it's really encouraging for people who want it to be at home with their children or their parents want to relaunch. And you did and have. So, shout out there. Now, in terms of the remote and hybrid work, what are you doing to help people feel connected that other people can learn from?

Becky Robinson: I would love to talk about that, Whitney. And it's changed in different ways over the years. I happen to as part of looking back over the decade of being in business, I happen to look at my calendar from 2012. And my calendar in 2012 looked a lot different than my calendar in 2022. But I'll tell you what's the same. In 2012, and now on a weekly basis, I have meetings on my calendar with my team, and whenever possible those meetings are face to face. You know, in the early days I used to complain because we had GoTo Meeting, only four people could be on camera. You know, now we have Zoom. We can all be on camera. And, you know, part of any of those meetings with my team is to prioritize our personal connection before work. So, on every phone call with my team, we always try to connect and check in with each other. How are you doing? What's going on? How is your weekend? So, in those face-to-face meetings, that's critically important to really acknowledge that people have things outside of work that might be influencing them at any given time and to make space for that.

Becky Robinson: The other thing is we use Basecamp for our project management, and we have these regular rhythms to the week. You know, some of them we use more than more than others. So, one of the things that we do in our company is we have a gratitude prompt, and many of my team members will answer that prompt regularly. It's what, what are you grateful for today? And as we share what we're grateful for, it does a couple of different things know. First of all, that gratitude gives us a window into what someone else is experiencing in their life and work. And, you know, it also just the act of expressing gratitude puts us in a better mindset as we begin our workday. So, in person, you know, face to face meetings where we prioritize our relationship above the work. And then, you know, asynchronous communication in our project management software that invites people to contribute their ideas and share about what they're experiencing in their lives. So, those are a couple of things.

Whitney Johnson: Have you done an in-person meeting with everybody or as many people as possible since yet?

Becky Robinson: Since COVID? No. In 2019, we did bring our team together in person for the first time, the largest group to that date. I mean, we had had some smaller in-person gatherings along the way up to 2019. But in 2019 we had a massive meeting and brought people in and had a facilitator and it was an extraordinary experience. It's among the best of my journey as a business owner. We are starting to plan for another one in 2023 and then this fall, I'm hoping to bring together my leadership team. Actually, Whitney, I don't know if you ever heard about this, but my in-person team planned a surprise party for me when my book came out in April. And while my entire team wasn't there, you know, just shout out to Amy, who's our VP of Ops, for what she did. She had several people who were local enough to drive, show up in person, and there were probably ten or 12 of our team who came to the party and then others submitted videos and they stitched together this video like surprise of clients and team. And I felt so loved and appreciated by that. It was amazing.

Whitney Johnson: It's beautiful. So, Becky, as we wrap up, could you talk us through what has been useful for you in this conversation, either said or unsaid, because our listeners find it intriguing to hear what your takeaways are.

Becky Robinson: Sure. So, Whitney for me, it's so powerful to talk to you as an old friend and to reflect back on the journey that we've each been on over this decade. And what stands out to me sometimes I tend to be hard on myself. So, what's showing up for me in some ways is, is like a bit of frustration of, man, I should have learned this by now. As it relates to, you know, letting making space for others so that I can do the parts that only I can do. But there's also gratitude of, you know, just even surviving across ten years. There are so many business owners who, who don't make it past the first few years. It's exciting to be on this journey. And, you know, I hope that for those who are listening, they can be inspired to really look at the people in their lives, what they've learned from them, and how they can use that to jump to that next S Curve or make an even bigger impact with their work.

Whitney Johnson: I wrote the forward for your book, *Reach*. You, you gave me that wonderful, tremendous honor. And so, what I thought I would do is read a paragraph from that forward as we wrap up, and I'll give you an opportunity to say share some final thoughts, but I'll go ahead and read this.

Whitney Johnson: What I love most about *Reach* is that Becky isn't hawking fame. Some of you may become famous, but that's not the promise of the book, nor is it ultimately the goal. Fame does not guarantee that an individual's work will be of value to others. Becky's goal is for anyone with a message to be heard by the people who

want and need to hear it. She wants everyone's voice to have the opportunity to do the job it is meant to do. That's her promise. And she keeps it.

Whitney Johnson: Any final thoughts?

Becky Robinson: As you're reading. I was just thinking about this phrase that we each have said a lot over the last ten years. And yeah, I'm sure you probably said it first and I've repeated it again and again and again. You know, you have to show up. So, as I was listening to you, I hope that those who are listening today who do have a message that they want to share will take seriously the idea of the four commitments and will investigate how they might choose them, you know. Identifying the value that they have to bring to others, choosing to show up consistently to share that value. Doing it over a long period of time and sharing as freely as they can. And when I think about you, Whitney, what I most admire about you is that you have never stopped showing up. It was such a big thing for me that I started this journey with you. And I love the way that you've brought your whole self to online spaces, and I love when I keep seeing you show up.

Whitney Johnson: Thank you, Becky. This was lovely.

I really enjoyed catching up with Becky. Here are three of my takeaways. Number one Reach equals expanding audience plus lasting impact. Even if you're not an aspiring author, Becky's framework can apply to you. I love how she makes a distinction between online reach and in-person connections. They're different, but deeply connected. You must offer a real sustainable value proposition for your work and commit to growing that all the time. But don't neglect the real-life connections. A coffee shop conversation or a phone call with one person can create lasting impact with important ripples. It may feel small compared to going viral online, but it's far more sustainable. I'm really grateful that Becky shared her book signing where nobody showed up in person despite her best online efforts. It was a light bulb moment for her that small, in-person connections are sometimes more important than big online swings.

Number two. Don't be shy about leveraging your network. A quick behind the scenes moment for you. After we stopped recording, Becky shared some additional thoughts on privilege that she felt were important. Launching a business or jumping to a new S Curve is hard for anyone, but she also acknowledged that she had the financial breathing room to take that risk. Not everyone does. For members of underrepresented groups, there are additional layers of challenge that are important to recognize, illustrated by the example of Natalie Nixon, who almost gave up on getting a publishing deal. As a black woman writing about creativity, she felt that her ideas didn't matter because she was unable to access the same channels as her peers. She needed a colleague's introduction to get a foot in the publishing door. Becky's advice. Don't be afraid to leverage your network, especially as a member of an underrepresented group. And if you have the privilege of being connected, then be the connector for your colleague whose ideas deserve to be heard.

Which brings me to number three. Your network is much bigger and more generous than you think. When it's time to launch your next big project, whether that's a book, a new product, a biz dev initiative, anything. Becky says, imagine you're throwing a huge party and inviting everyone that matters with no regard for expenses. Who would you invite? Put those names into a spreadsheet. You may not think it's very many people but think of everyone you've ever met in your career, personal life, family members, friends of friends. One of her clients took a weekend

to do this and came up with 10,000 names. This is more than a networking exercise. People love being included, and they love to help.

If you'd like a copy of Becky's book, *Reach, Create the Biggest Possible Audience for Your Message, Book, or Cause*. I'm giving away five copies to listeners of the show. Simply email me at wj@whitneyjohnson.com And we'll send Becky's book to the first people who reach out.

For further listening, you may want to go back to the [Ken Blanchard episode](#), who when I interviewed him, he said, I'm a fan of Becky Robinson. Also, listen to Ben Hardy, [Episode 46](#), about the experience of launching a book. And to listen to someone who you may not have heard of but has reach, give Karen Walrond, [Episode 27](#), another listen. One final thought. I loved what Becky said about taking a moment with her team to express gratitude before starting a meeting or a project. So, I'd like to express some right now. Thank you again to Becky Robinson for being our guest. Thank you for listening. Thank you to our producer, Matt Silverman, audio editor Whitney Jobe, production assistant Stephanie Brummel, and production coordinator Nicole Pellegrino.

I'm Whitney Johnson.

And this is Disrupt Yourself.