

Announcer:

The Art of Leadership Network.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Welcome to the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. It's Carey here, and I hope our time together today helps you thrive in life and leadership. Man, I love meeting young leaders and we got a couple of incredible young leaders on the podcast today. Joey and Christy Speers are some of the best marketers and branding people I know, and we talk about top marketing mistakes church leaders make, how to get noticed online, and the keys to effective entrepreneurship when you're in your teens and 20s. They have quite a story.

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Hello to all the new listeners there. We know you are paying for this with your time. We think this will be great value today. Let me tell you a little bit about Joey and Christy Speers. They're the founders of Creativ Rise and ineedbrandtherapy.com. As two young newly married entrepreneurs, their aim is to build a world where more people succeed doing what they love. After building a six-figure creative agency as a teenager, Joey decided to share the secrets of building a creative business and so he started Creativ Rise, a business education platform for creatives. He also started ineedbrandtherapy.com, a consulting service for large and small organizations and brands. Today he's a brand strategist, marketing consultant and communicator.

Christy Speers founded a thriving destination wedding photography business and now shoots commercially for large companies such as LaCroix, or LaCroix, for all you Americans, Sparkling Water and Anthropologie. She's the co-owner of Creativ Rise and the co-founder of a non-profit compassion causes that brings clean water to Nicaragua. We talk about all that and more. I think you're going to love it. Research from Harvard Business Review found that during a recession, firms that cut costs faster and deeper than rivals actually don't flourish and businesses that boldly invest more than their rivals during a recession don't always farewell either. The study revealed there's a sweet spot with 9% of companies growing during a recession, and the key is your strategy. That is why Pro MediaFire wants to invite you to the recession Proof Growth Strategy webinar this month.

The event is free and for businesses, for nonprofits and for churches, it's going to be particularly helpful. During this webinar, you're going to learn how to discover your sweet spot to thrive, discover the growth hacker framework to grow online and understand how technology can help you save money and grow you. You can sign up today for the recession Proof Growth Strategy webinar. Simply go to promediafire.com/recessionproof. That's promediafire.com/recessionproof. What are you doing to really help people around the world? What are you doing personally? What are you doing at your church? Do you know Convoy of Hope has helped over 100,000 individuals in Ukraine? But they're also all over the world. The average church can't get to the place as Convoy of Hope finds itself. You can't do it. You don't have the scale. Even if you're a megachurch, guess what? You don't. That's why partners like Convoy of Hope are so valuable for churches.

If you want to help or you want to partner with them and you want to stand up in front of your church and tell them, "Hey, we're in Ukraine. Hey, we're delivering relief to Puerto Rico. Hey, we are helping out people in America and around the world when they're in trouble," go to convoyofhope.org/donate. They're fantastic people, so go to convoyofhope.org/donate and check it out today. Well, I'm so excited

you're with us today. I love listening to podcasts. So whether you are at the gym, on your bike, in the kitchen or whatever you're doing, maybe you're sitting in a hammock enjoying the last fumes of summer and fall. Here's my conversation with Joey and Christy Speers. Joey and Christy, welcome to the podcast.

Christy Speers:

Thank you. Thanks for having us. Appreciate it.

Joey Speers:

Do we get a backyard cookout like Karen got?

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, we're going to a restaurant. Sorry.

Joey Speers:

That was my favorite part of that episode. She's like, "Oh, we got to get out there. Family's out there and we got ribs."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, Tony's out of town and basically I got steak, that's it, or chicken or something. That's all I got. So called out.

Christy Speers:

That's great.

Joey Speers:

Thanks for having us on. So glad to be here.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But we'll take you to dinner. Hey, it's been a long time in coming and I'm really fascinated because a lot of young leaders listening to this podcast and you guys, I find incredibly inspiring. I want to back up, start with your stories and then we're going to talk about entrepreneurship, we're going to talk about getting noticed online, branding, which you guys both specialize in, et cetera. Joey, I'll start with you. We've known each other for what, three or four years now? Probably.

Joey Speers:

Yeah, probably a year and a half before COVID.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, a year and a half before COVID. It's funny how it's just sort of like ADBC.

Christy Speers:

Oh, absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Okay.

Joey Speers:

It's so good.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I know some of your personal history, but you didn't fit in well at school. You found the traditional education system, by that, I'm not talking about university, I'm talking about kindergarten, way back when it was challenging and you started your entrepreneurial journey early. So if you could unpack your story and then I want to hear yours, Christy as well.

Christy Speers:

Great.

Joey Speers:

Okay. Yeah, we could do a whole episode I'm sure on this, but didn't fit in well like you said. Early age ADHD, diagnosed a lot of people, throw it around ADHD now, I'm like, "I'm an OG ADHD-er, actually diagnosed." I remember sitting in the room with a doctor when I was so young. ADHD, processing issues, that's a really interesting one. My brain does not process information certain ways very well, which is fascinating as I learned that. Then a couple different small learning disabilities, which set me up to not have a great time in the traditional education bath.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How did that show up? How did that manifest?

Joey Speers:

High energy.

Christy Speers:

Just ask his mom.

Joey Speers:

High energy.

Christy Speers:

When does this kid turn 18?

Joey Speers:

Yeah, seriously.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Can we get rid of him?

Joey Speers:

Really social and so I think naturally being really high energy and really social, going into an atmosphere where I didn't fully, you could say, keep up at the same rate other kids kept up. I would fall behind and my only way to stick in socially or whatever you say is maybe get myself in trouble. That's probably how it showed up. I've been a troublemaker since as early as I can remember, getting myself into trouble at school.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What did that trouble look like?

Joey Speers:

Super comfortable with conflict so I would always be... It would always be conflicts, not peer to peer, but myself to authority. It was always getting into it with teachers, youth pastors growing up, pastors, whatever it was, any type of authority that I could somehow get into trouble if I somehow found a way to get into trouble with.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And your an enneagram eight right?

Joey Speers:

Yes. To the bone. I wish I would've known that earlier because it probably could've helped me a lot, but I definitely did not know that. Story starts with that. Went to a private Christian school growing up, God bless the private Christian school I went to but it was not, people would say... My mom often says it wasn't always run as well as it maybe could have been for someone like myself. There wasn't in that private sectors and maybe not as much attention for people that have different needs, educational needs than some other people. I feel like from a young age I knew, "Hey, I don't enjoy education."

I loved school, I loved going to school, friends, sports, be on the sports team until I got kicked off the sports team type thing. But I loved being in that atmosphere. Yeah, it was always something that I knew was not going to be a path that I would continue down looking at post-secondary school and stuff. Ended up going into Grade 8. Terrible kid, terrible track record, that's the word that got me my entire life, "Oh your track record this, your track record that." Walked into my first day of Grade 8 and got put in a class with a teacher that threw a chair at me the previous year, we did not have a good relationship.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Your teacher threw a chair at you?

Joey Speers:

Yeah. Did not have a good relationship and I remember she walked in first day of Grade 8 and I went, "Man, I last year. I've got to push through. I'm so excited to get onto high school. Hopefully it's going to be a fresh start for me and hopefully I can reset my track record." I remember she came in, read a bunch of names off a piece of paper and said, "Hey, if you just had your name read out, please pick up your chair. You're going to be going out to a portable outside with you have a new teacher." And we were like, "Oh, interesting." It was a bunch of the bad kids and a few other kids that got lobbed in with us had to go outside of the portable. Our school got some new portables and I walked in, there's a gentleman sitting there, I had never seen him before. He was a brand new teacher at the school and he called kids up one by one.

Calls me up and he looked at me and said, "Hey, my name's Mr. Norris." He said, "Do you know what these are?" And he held up a little package of papers. I said, "Well yeah, I know what those are." I was embarrassed about it., It is my individual education plan so my IEP. Traditionally it's everything you can't do. Joey can't do this, he can't process this way, his ADHD forces him to act out like this. He just looked at me and said, "Hey man, you don't know me. I don't know you, but what I know about these papers are and what I've heard about you through your track record because every teacher in the school has told me about it today in our morning staff meeting before school started, none of this is, or none of these are walls, they're just hurdles and I'm going to actually teach you how to run and jump."

I think that was my first piece of authoritative, maybe just resetting of, "Hey, I understand your track record, but I'm not going to hold it against you. I'm going to help you learn how to do something else." That was a big moment for me. I almost cried and in my first day of Grade 8 class and it changed my life. Not in the moment, obviously there's a lot of stuff that had to change in me throughout the years to come and still changing as I grow up, but that was a big moment for me. I think what he did was he taught me how to learn that year, he taught me how to teach myself how to learn more importantly and that I think just propelled my excitement to get into entrepreneurship.

Since then, I think it's just been a road towards building things and going, how can I build something, hopefully succeed at it? If it doesn't succeed, how can I go back to the beginning, find somebody else that succeeded at it, ask them for help and have them be a guide. Then now a lot of our lives look like together, a lot of our lives, which I'm sure we're going to get into, is then reaching back and going, how do we help other people figure out how they learn and how can they help build themselves, things too? That's how the entrepreneurship stuff started.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I feel like we could spend the whole hour on that, which is fascinating. I want to pick up the entrepreneurial journey in a minute. Christy, I want to hear about your first decade or two of life. I imagine it was not quite as dramatic as Jerry's, was it?

Christy Speers:

Well, I'm an Enneagram 6, so the fear of authority was strong in me, so a little bit different. I'm the American, so I'm sitting between two Canadians, I'm American. Born Chicago, moved over to California when I was just a baby with my family and they started... They planted a church. My parents are church planters from the very beginning. It's all I've ever known is being a pastor's kid, which honestly, and actually probably surprisingly, I didn't hate, actually had a great experience about.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I want to talk about that just to connect the dots. Tell people who your parents are.

Christy Speers:

My parents are Ray and Carol Johnston, pastors over at Bayside Church in California.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Huge megachurch. Very effective, very powerful. One of my good friends ended up there recently, mark Clark is now there.

Christy Speers:

We love him, we love him.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How can you not love Mark? I mean, my gosh. I bet you another kid who really struggled in school. I got to talk to him about that at some point.

Joey Speers:

Do you think so?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, I would think so.

Joey Speers:

Do you think so?

Carey Nieuwhof:

I would think so.

Christy Speers:

You could draw that parallel probably. You could probably draw that parallel.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Funny. And one day you'll end up on a podcast. Okay.

Christy Speers:

Yes. Yeah. Grew up in California and went to school. Didn't have any teachers throw any chairs at me, but had a pretty good time.

Joey Speers:

It was a great experience. You missed that one.

Christy Speers:

Yeah, had a pretty good time in school. Graduated university and was always flip flopping what I wanted to do. I almost went to law school, worked in a law firm for a little while, but actually went completely the opposite direction and got into the creative industry. I became a wedding photographer, did that for five years, shooting weddings all around the world. Got into that and brand photography and that whole-

Carey Nieuwhof:

What was attractive about law to you?

Christy Speers:

Honestly? I studied business in school and really loved it, but went into a law class, a business law class, which is probably about as dry of a law class as you can probably get.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, yeah. Contracts.

Christy Speers:

And I had the driest law professor could have ever had. And for some reason I was excited to go to class every day and I was just like, "Man, something in this is so interesting." I think, and maybe this is also attributes a little bit to our entrepreneurial journey, is that I love arranging things to make it work and fit and actually move forward. I think that's a little bit of law, you're taking pieces from stories, you're taking past law and you're putting it into the present and you're arranging things to fit and work. I think that piece and the interaction with people is what I just loved. Solving problems, figuring out how to move forward, I think that's what interests me. Then I went and worked at a law firm and I was like, "Oh wait, nevermind, nevermind. This is not for me. This is not for me."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Law firms are particularly interesting species.

Christy Speers:

Absolutely, absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But that is a hard right or hard left. I mean you end up going from law, which is buttoned down into creative photography and an entrepreneurial journey on your own. Why photography?

Christy Speers:

It was actually not an accident that I started it, but I started a nonprofit with a friend and we were drilling wells down in Nicaragua having a blast and I was like, "Okay, this is what I'm going to put all my time into." And I had just graduated university. Student loans, all of that kind of stuff I was like, "Man, the nonprofit bills right now are not paying on this startup nonprofit." I was like, "What skill do I have?" And I was like, "Okay, I've had a lot of people ask me to shoot their senior photos from school or their wedding or whatever."

I was like, "Okay, I'll give myself six months if I can make this into something that could be full-time so that I can do the nonprofit stuff and not have to get paid by the nonprofit. That's my goal, I don't want to have to be paid by the non-profit. I just want to be able to do stuff for the non-profit." Gave myself six months and said, "If I can turn this into a thriving business and great and if not, I'll do something else." After six months I was flying around the world doing all these things and having a full-time income with it and just kind of ran with it, to be honest.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We're going to have, because I do-

Christy Speers:

I was not one of those, I was born a photographer artist at all. I was like, "I like people and I can be around people with a camera and..."

Joey Speers:

That's both of us.

Christy Speers:

... build a business around it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's what's going to make this such a fascinating conversation. Both of you, it's not like you languished for 10 years then all of a sudden had your breakthrough. It was a pretty meteoric rise. Joey picking up where we left off, first of all, I got to ask why did the teacher throw the chair at you? When you talked about the chair, I'm like, "Yeah, yeah." I mean I can imagine-

Joey Speers:

I don't fully remember the story, but I can guarantee you it was something happened in the classroom. No one was going to take a stand against the authority so I was like, "Great, I'm in. Put me in coach." That was me. If anyone needs to step in and do something to oppose the authority that I thought was being abused, whether it was or not, I think that was my role. So yeah, I don't know.

Christy Speers:

I'm sure the teacher knows.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. I'm sure the teacher knows.

Christy Speers:

I'm sure the teacher remembers.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And just out of exasperation frustration, she checked the chair at you.

Joey Speers:

Yeah. Those typical blue, the blue chair with the metal legs.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I can picture it.

Christy Speers:

Did she make contact?

Joey Speers:

There's another guy named Brad in my class, we both got it and got it thrown at us.

Christy Speers:

Wow, love it.

Joey Speers:

Great couple of crazy years.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I've been reading 10 years after everyone else, David and Goliath by Malcolm Gladwell recently, and one of the arguments he makes, which I think is interesting, if you look at the number of highly successful people, CEOs like Richard Branson... I'm going to get the math wrong, but something like a third of them are dyslexic and the usual narrative is, "Oh, I succeeded despite my dyslexia." And the spin that Malcolm Gladwell puts on it, who we also had on this podcast, he says, "Well what if it was because of? What if the inability to fit to conform to the typical mold is what actually made you stand out and search other things?"

I'm curious on your take for that when you look... Because I think I was like... I'm significantly older than you are, but I probably am ADD. I don't know about HD but ADD for sure, and I've had friends, met doctors sort of say, "Yes, yes, this is true." Again, I was an okay student, I wasn't a great student. Once I hit university, I kind of found my lane but yeah, I kind of propelled me, I'm not going to work for other people, I'm going to do something on my own. How did that impact your entrepreneurial journey or can you see the dotted line or the story line or the split line there?

Joey Speers:

Yeah, of course. I think it's probably a lot of things, and I'm sure Malcolm could not as head to that and give a lot of educated examples on why it's a lot of things. But for me, I love the quote and we've all heard it, "The pain of your past is your field for the future." I think if I look at in my past, the story we were just talking about where my Grade 8 teacher said, "Hey, here's your IEP, do you know what this is said?" I said, "Yes." I think what he taught me was he taught me how to break my track record that year and really, if I was to put that into a business objective narrative, I would say he taught me how to rebrand. He taught me how to rebrand myself personally and I think if I look back to what I do now and I go, "Okay, why do I do what I do now and why am I so excited about it and why do I feel it comes so naturally to me?"

I think it's because that was really my only option. It was like I either learned how to rebrand or I would follow what my principal said, "Oh, you're going to be in jail by the time you're 17." I was like, "Oh, he taught me how to rebrand." Now when I look at life, I feel like that's now shaped my worldview. Everywhere I look, every business venture I get into, all the churches we work with or organizations or friends, even just in conversations, it's I'm always looking at it from the perspective. of How can we re-identify whatever this is to create a brighter future.

I think maybe I got a taste to that earlier than some people, call it self-awareness maybe just due to the situation and that guidance I had from hand. My parents are phenomenal too. They've always been big fans of me pushing me on despite all of the circumstances that they were thrown. Yeah, it's probably a mix of a lot of those things but I think it's that critical moment that I had that had such a large buildup of pain. It allowed me to see a brighter future for the first time at a long time and I think that has propelled me to, I think, be optimistic about creating that for myself and then helping other people create that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Do you think or do you agree with the possibility that had that teacher not shown up, you could have been headed for prison by 17?

Joey Speers:

Probably.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Really?

Joey Speers:

Well, I just-

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's reasonable.

Joey Speers:

Yeah. I never was doing stupid things in terms of drinking and drug. I never got into that stuff. I was always very self-aware on what I was excited to do in life and what I was definitely not going to do. I always had pretty harsh do's and don'ts, but the objections to authority I think is one of the strongest parts of my personality. I think it had such a dark side of that for so long because I wasn't really aware of it, nor had to care on how to handle it properly. Yes, I'm sure it would've gotten me into a lot more trouble than I've gotten myself into.

Christy Speers:

Maybe just resisting arrest, maybe that's just what he would be in for. Not actually doing anything wrong, it would be resisting arrest.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Entrepreneurship, you were really young when you started, not the side hustle, just a job. You didn't go and work at a corner store or most of the... got a job at camp, I think you did work at a camp.

Joey Speers:

Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But you know what I mean. There's sort of a path for a teenager, your path was really different. What happened and when did you start?

Joey Speers:

Yeah, I got to the age 12, 13 where you're starting to get a little bit more independent. I'm a big extreme sports guy so we used to do a lot of stupid things, jumping off bridges into water, cliff jumping, lots of skiing, snowboarding, skateboarding, all of that fun stuff, biking. I remember I was always the kid going, "Well, somebody has to take a video of this because it's either going to work or somebody's going to get

hurt and either way it's a great video." I was always the kid who was like, "Oh, I'll film it and then I'll do it and then I can pass the camera to you can film it." I think I started shooting videos and it was all video, no photo, all video, hardcore at probably 11 through 13. I would come home, make a video or two a day. It was all I wanted to do was create something and take it-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Just for your friends.

Joey Speers:

Take it show my parents, take it show my grandparents, take it and show my friend's parents and scare the daylight out of them because like, "What my kid jumped into water on a bike?" I think over time I turned 12, 13 and people started saying, "Wow, I saw the video your mom posted on Facebook that you made. Have you ever thought about maybe doing a video? Could you shoot a video of this for my business?" And I would go, "Oh, totally." As a 13-year-old, I'm running around with a little backpack of camera gear on a very cheap budget camera set of equipment, and I would start making videos. What I learned was, "Wow, I can actually help people solve problems. They're coming to me with this type of problem and I can fix that for them." For someone who was always told, "You can't do anything, you can't do anything, you can't do anything," as a kid, that level of, I guess ownership over helping somebody do something at the age of 13 was really, really addicting. It was really fun.

I just latched on to trying to help people solve problems and I think the first method of that was filmmaking that I found, which then took me into marketing and took me into a bunch of other stuff. I started a company at 14 and I just went, "This is what I'm going to do for my life... with my life. I'm just going to get myself through high school." High school was great for me by the way. I really turned, I think my reputation over in high school, which was phenomenal. I had great relationships with my teachers and I think it's because I finally found something I could channel all my energy and everything into, which really allowed me, I think, to have a better experience with people.

got into that at the age of 14 and that's... I say to people, "Right place, right time." That's when social media really started to take off. There was the earlier days of Instagram and I remember being young enough to have all the time in the world to put all my eggs in that basket, but old enough to also be socially aware enough of how the platforms worked. I think I got a good chunk of my life through the ages of 14, 15, 16, 17, where I dedicated a lot of time to studying how people interact with each other online, how industries try and sell through the internet. It gave me a lot of cool opportunity to grow as a problem solver.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How did the jump go from your parents' friends, which is one thing, because I think everybody's got parents' friends, to being flown around the world doing brand shoots for international corporations as a teenager?

Joey Speers:

I remember seeing a video early, early, early when Instagram came out with video. This was probably, I don't know what year this would've been, but I think I was maybe 14 and I remember it was Gary V, this is early Gary V days. He's sitting getting his haircut and he's talking and he said, "If you want to be working with brands as whatever, if you want to be successful on the internet, you should be reaching out to people for five to seven hours a day." I would spend all day at high school reaching out to brands.

I would spend all night when I got home reaching out to brands. I had this little school computer, because of my IEP so they gave me a free computer. I would just sit there in class and I'm just looking up emails, I'm guessing emails, I'm guessing like contact or marketing at blank company.

I would just reach out and pitch and pitch and pitch and they were terrible but over all those years of doing that, I probably sent thousands of emails or direct messages on Instagram asking people, it always sounded like, "Hey, my name's Joey, I'm a photographer or a filmmaker. Can we work together?" Which is a terrible pitch, but that's what it's all started out as. I think over time I learned how to, I learned how to... I learned how to refine that and I learned how to go, "Okay, you've got to figure this out and you've got to figure that out." I think it was just, I had a lot of time, Carey, and I didn't feel like there was anything else I wanted to do other than solve problems for people.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm so glad you told that story because as Seth Gordon says over and over again, "So many of us are waiting to be picked." How come you didn't see that Facebook video that my mom posted? How come you're not reaching out to me? Why aren't you? It's like five to seven, this is now 500 and blank episodes in such a repeated theme. Cold calling, willing to be rejected, getting a thousand rejections and one acceptance and keeping going. Okay, Christy, back to you. This is fascinating. I feel like it's two different episodes, season one, season two of whatever. Law, no, photography, yes, and a rocket ride. In six months, you're being flown around the world. Walk us through that.

Christy Speers:

Yeah, I think similar story to Joey a little bit in that it was the right place at the right time. I basically reached out to a couple photographers that I knew that I knew of. I actually didn't have any close friends that were photographers at the time, so I just found some random people that I was following on Instagram and was like, "Hey, can I come and shadow you for a couple shoots?" Started doing that and then honestly it just took off. Instagram was a huge... Probably 90% of my clients were from Instagram.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What year is this, roughly?

Christy Speers:

What year would this have been? Let's see.

Joey Speers:

I didn't know you then.

Christy Speers:

Yeah, it was probably 2017, I think.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, so it was fairly recent, five years ago.

Christy Speers:

Yeah, it was about five... Yeah, yeah, five years ago. That's probably it. Yeah, 2017. Basically just put my eggs all in the Instagram basket at that time, which now as we are business coaches, we say maybe don't put all your eggs in one basket, but at the time-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hey, but it worked.

Christy Speers:

At the time, it worked for me and it wasn't a referral network. It wasn't like, "Oh, I have all these friends that are getting married." That's how it works, which a lot of, I feel like traditional photography businesses are based on, but mine was all Instagram. I would post something, I'd tag the right people, it would be reposted like 100 times and so then these random people from Jamaica were seeing, or these random people from New York or whatever it was just started reaching out.

It was one of those things where I was just super consistent and I made it a very personal brand. I didn't make it very corporate. I was like, "Okay, I want people to hire me just for my... I'm really candid." I was very candid with my clients. I wanted to become their friend for the day, not just their photographer. I think a lot of people really resonated with that and it just ended up snowballing. It's almost hard to pinpoint exactly what did it, but yeah, I just tried to make it as personal-

Joey Speers:

She was consistent.

Christy Speers:

... as possible and would just consistently chipped away and it just kind of took off.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I know the strategy changes about every 14 minutes on Instagram, et cetera, but talk a little bit about the... because both of you have initiative, both of you, you're not sitting there going, "Well, I took a picture where's the business coming from?" Talk about your strategy of tagging and reaching out to people. I'm sure the tagging wouldn't work the same way today, but talk about some of the principles and even how you reached out to people, Christy, and said, "Hey," because that would still work theoretically, right?

Christy Speers:

Oh, yeah. I think the old school ways of cold calling and reaching out is the way to build a great business even now. I don't think it's all just like, "Oh, I did the right hashtag and so now my business is going to blow up." I worked with this brand, I remember at the beginning of my photography that moment, I sat down and said, "I'm going to give myself six months." I also wrote, "Here's some brands that would be dream brands to work with." One of them was Anthropologie. I was like, "Okay, I'd love to work for Anthropologie," which if you are a woman or maybe you have a wife, it's this big brand and they've got a wedding line called BHLDN. I remember just being, "If I could work with that brand, that would be such a dream." I remember I was shooting a lot of brides that were wearing their dresses. Every single time I would tag the BHLDN brand in every single post where there was a bride wearing that dress.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Even though... Oh, but then it was a BHLDN dress if they were?

Christy Speers:

Yeah, these brides were wearing this dress and so I'd constantly tag them. I'd be posting on my story if I was at a wedding being like, "Oh, I'm so excited to shoot this BHLDN dress." I just kept pounding on their Instagram door essentially. Then one day after probably two years, they reached out and they said, "Hey Christy, we've seen you post so much about us. We're doing this big shoot in Napa Valley and we want to do a whole weekend and we want you to be our photographer for our next campaign in our line of new dresses." My jaw is dropped and I was-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Not a bad place to have to go.

Christy Speers:

No, no.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's pretty cool.

Christy Speers:

The slow chipping away at relational equity online is huge, that law reciprocation. I'm giving so much to this brand or whatever it is, another client, giving them value first I think is always, always the best way to go because again, so many people, especially I feel like artists have this idea of, "Well, my art is so great, that should be speaking for itself." No, you-

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's the typical.

Christy Speers:

... you speak for yourself and you give your value first and then you see what comes back, and it tends to be pretty good.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How do you deal with the delay? It's funny, people think I'm sponsored by Big Green Egg and I've tagged them probably 500 times and they've never reached out to me once. If they did, I'm like, "Hey, that's my hobby. Okay, you want to send me a free cover? That's awesome, that'd be great." I'm not going to go about becoming a barbecue guy, but this was your career. How do you deal with the fact that you have been appropriately, and I would assume with some level of emotional intelligence, tagging this BHLDN dress from Anthropologie for two years dead silence, nothing. Were you disappointed or you're like, "No, I'm playing the long game?" What was your plan?

Christy Speers:

I never in a million years thought they would ever reach out to me. Joey has natural confidence, I'm just not him. I feel like I have a natural skepticism. I was pleasantly surprised but I think to deal with that, I

think it's having multiple irons in the fire. I think having so many things that you're getting excited about that could happen. The delay doesn't matter because each delay is going to be a different amount of times that something's hopefully clicking every... frequently something-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Staggered, yeah.

Christy Speers:

Something's happening consistently because you are pursuing so many options. That's why when we tell people they're trying to work with brands, we're like, "Great, reach out to 10. Don't just leave it after the one, reach out to 10 and hopefully one will work."

Carey Nieuwhof:

So you didn't put it all in the Anthropologie basket?

Christy Speers:

No, no, but it ended up clicking and that was great. Then there's other brands that I was tagging all the time, never heard from. It's one of those things where sometimes it clicks and sometimes it doesn't.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I want to talk, before we move on from personal narratives, but you did love being a pastor's kid and that is such a rare story. You have a vibrant faith, a great relationship with your mom and dad today. What were some things that went right in your childhood?

Christy Speers:

Oh, that's great. I think there's two different things at play in not having a negative experience when it comes to being a pastor's kid. Obviously, not everything was perfect by far, but I think there's two things at play. One was our church. My parents both came from non-Christian homes, not just like, "Oh, they went to church, but it wasn't a big part of their life." They got persecuted for their faith when they became Christians from their family, it was not a supported thing at all. They didn't grow up with the, "Oh, the Christian family does this." I remember them telling us that they sat down with some of their Christian friends and they're like, "So being a Christian and having a family, what does it even look like?" Trying to get tips and things.

I actually think that was such a positive thing because there wasn't this sense of expectation on us because... I didn't even know what my parents expectations would be honest with that. I think the way they brought that so much into the church culture, because I think a lot of people feel wounded by the church as a pastor's kid. Maybe they have a great relationship with their parents, but for some reason the church felt like it was pulling them back and I feel like Bayside and my family and the way my parents are wired is very much... It's not a church that holds you back, it's really trying to push you forward. That's very much their mentality, especially my dad. He has such a dreamer mentality of visionary mentality, maximizer that I felt challenged in church rather than needing to be buttoned up.

I think that's where a lot of times it goes wrong with pastor's kids is that they feel like, "Oh, you're not allowed to say that at church, or you're not allowed to wear that, you're not allowed to do this." I felt like at church it was almost like we're being challenged and pushed and what's possible for you in your

life that I felt like I had to show up and get excited and be moving forward because things were moving and shaking in my church.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's really cool.

Christy Speers:

It wasn't this traditional stuffy church experience. I think that was one key piece in that it being a positive experience. Then secondly, my parents make it so easy to love them because they just try so hard with us. I never felt like I was second to the ministry. I never felt like I was in the background and we got the scraps of my dad's time. He did everything he could to be at every baseball game, soccer game, whatever it was, some dumb play we'd be in he would be there. He would fly back early from a conference or he'd every single time... If I called him right now and he's in a board meeting, he would pick up, 100% would pick up. I've always viewed my dad as my dad, not my pastor. I think that was the biggest two components to having just a normal relationship with your parents that you actually love.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Joey, you've got a funny meeting story too, involving LAX, how the two of you met. You want to tell us, give us the nutshell version of it? It's just fun.

Joey Speers:

Yeah. I was flying home from Los Angeles. There was a season of my life between probably 18 to 21 where I was going to LA quite a bit, had some clients there and I was in some business masterminds and different communities out there, which was so helpful for me. I was flying home from that one time and I was in the LAX airport security line, minding my own business, totally alone but I kept walking past this girl. I was like, "Oh, that's the most American looking girl I've ever seen in my life."

Carey Nieuwhof:

I still don't know what's-

Joey Speers:

She doesn't fully know. I don't really know how to describe that but I was like, "For some reason she just looks really American." And I kept noticing that and that's always a funny part of the story but all of a sudden I'm standing in line, I'm pushing my backpack through the TSA little section there and I get a tap on the shoulder and I turn around and it's the American girl. I went, "Oh my gosh." And she said, "Hey, is that a camera bag?" And I said, "Yeah, it's a camera bag." She said, "Oh, I'm a photographer. Are you a photographer?" I said, "Yeah." We conversed for 10 seconds about it and then I said, "Well, I'll show you the bag on the other side because it's gone. It's already in the machine."

We got to the other side of security, I showed her the bag really quick and we kind of just exchanged... I said, "Hey, I bought the bag in Kirra, New Zealand, in Kirra, Australia, not New Zealand." And I said, "I have no idea where you can buy it, but I know what the bag's called. Let me look it up and I'll send it to you." I sent it to her on Instagram and we kind of just stayed in touch really loosely, really loosely for another maybe six, six-ish months. Then I was back in LA after that about six months later and she was in LA as well for something and we went on a hike. The rest is history, so pretty crazy. Yeah, it's wild to think about.

Christy Speers:

Never know you'd meet in the airport.

Joey Speers:

I just don't let her tap anybody on the shoulder anymore when we're in the airport.

Christy Speers:

Yeah, that's my one and only camera bag.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Do you think he was the most Canadian looking guy you'd ever seen, Christy?

Joey Speers:

Absolutely. I still don't know what being looking like American is, but I'll take it as a compliment.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It is definitely a compliment. You've got a burgeoning career, you've got a successful career. The two of you meet, you get married and then you did something that I think is very, very rare. You kind of merged your businesses.

Christy Speers:

Okay, so Carey, we actually merged our businesses within two weeks of dating.

Joey Speers:

Three weeks.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Whoa. I got the chronology wrong. Within a few weeks of dating.

Christy Speers:

Yeah, basically

Joey Speers:

We started dating February 11th, 2020. I did two trips, three trips. From February 11th to March 12th, I did three trips down to see her. Border patrol was going, "What the heck are you doing? You were just here three days ago, what are you doing?" It was a crazy time. I was just like, "Oh, I'm going to the beach. Well, I can't say that because they don't want you to know you have a..."

Christy Speers:

You don't want to say.

Joey Speers:

There's no relational thing or else Border Patrol will be, "We're not going to let you in because they don't want you to come in and get married as a Canadian going to the States." So I just would say, "Oh I'm going to the beach," or whatever.

Christy Speers:

Which was true.

Joey Speers:

Anyways, I knew we were going to get married ASAP. Took it a little bit longer but COVID hits and we were both, you could say, leaders in our different respective creative industries. I was in the brand world commercial space, she was in the wedding space at the time and all these people start freaking out because they're all service providers who are losing their jobs. I thought I had some solutions, she had some great solutions. We both had different communities in those spaces and we brought them together. At the time I was running Creativ Rise, which is 85% of what we do now and she had just started this thing called Home Team where she was going, "We're all at home, Let's be a team. Let's get online each day and talk about these things."

Christy Speers:

I basically went online and said, "Okay, I know everyone's freaking out." This is at the very beginning, they had just locked us down and I was like, "Okay, I want to use this time to ramp up. I don't want this to be like we're all taking our time off. I want to actually use this to grow our businesses in this time. Who is with me?" Within 24 hours we had 1,500 people on an email list. So excited.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's insane.

Joey Speers:

Yeah, it was crazy. Well I was telling her, I'm like, "You don't understand how insane that is." Because it was our first time doing something like that.

Christy Speers:

I was like, "We're just going to do this for free, we're just going to host these people, bring on cars."

Joey Speers:

If you could have monetized that. That's how I'm thinking. Anyways, we start doing things together and, this is very controversial I think for a lot of people in their own marriages, it was one of the best things we could've ever done for our relationship because I think it forced us to have crucial conversations or critical conversations, even if they were about work. It forced us to learn how to have confrontation in a healthy way and understand each other's conflict styles quickly and how to take a back seat when the other one needs the lead and how to... vice versa, which is something we both needed to learn because we were both fiercely independent and very solo. We're flying solo. It was really good, I think, for our relationship.

COVID lockdown happens, we didn't get to see each other for five months. We've been dating for three weeks and so-

Christy Speers:

I'm telling you.

Joey Speers:

But this work thing, we were working with each other all day because we were trying to help creatives get through the pandemic. I think it was phenomenal for our relationship and it's been phenomenal ever since. I will never not work with her because she has so many things I don't have and I think vice versa. More importantly, I think she sharpens me in ways that I really need to be sharpened in our non-work relationship in our marriage. I think that also carries into our working relationship and I think we're both better for it.

Christy Speers:

Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What would you add to that?

Christy Speers:

I would say with Joey being naturally confident, and I would say with myself being naturally Enneagram 6 skeptical, I feel like there are so many entrepreneurial nudges I had growing up. I think I was born very wanting to build things, wanting to take that action and take fast action on things, but often stopping myself being like, "Ah, but I don't know if I can really do it, I don't know." Those internal critic comes out and I feel like us working together, Joey has been such a champion. If you know him and if you've ever been talked to him about anything, his favorite thing in the world is championing other people. I feel like I get the front row seat to that working together. I would say that there are 100% challenges, but I'm like, "There's no challenge that we can't work through to get through it together."

Carey Nieuwhof:

What have been some of the challenges in working together?

Christy Speers:

We both are a little bit visionary. It's not one of us is totally the integrator. Integrator is the right word, right?

Joey Speers:

Yes. Integrator.

Christy Speers:

Integrator in one person's the dominant, this is where we're going. I feel like we have butted heads more than a fair share of times on direction of things and things like that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Break that down. How do you get through that? My parents work together and I always, Tony and I, my wife and I, we met in law school and I said we could never work together and now we're working

together, but it's working out great. I'm a real student of this. There's a lot of people who are like, "I'm working with my spouse," and there's a lot of people are like, "I don't know whether I ever could."

Christy Speers:

Go for it.

Joey Speers:

I've got a good answer for this. Okay. Carey, you did a whole series on the enneagram at Connexis. That was... I think I've told you this, I think I told you that this is one of the first times we've probably interacted. I think I came up to you after one of those services.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, yeah. That's around the time we met.

Joey Speers:

That entire series changed my life because up until then and still most days, and I have to be checked on this, I think that the way I view the world, the Enneagram 8 way is the only way to view the world.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, that's correct.

Joey Speers:

It is correct.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That is correct.

Joey Speers:

Then when you marry a six and work with a six every day, I think we butt heads. I would say my fall in working together is probably more often than not thinking that my way is always the right way. "Well this copy, it has to be this way because I know it. Then she goes, "Well, I know as well." I go, "No, you're wrong." But then I go, "Wait, no, she's not wrong." I think there's probably a lot of micro-examples of that, whether it's about podcast content that we're writing for our podcast, whether it's about the way we visualize a new product that we're building, the way we treat people who work on our team. There's so many different things where we naturally just have different world views that shape the way that we interact with those subjects.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I've got to ask this, because you're still young and yet you haven't burned out or anything like that in the years of wisdom, how do you get open to a different point of view, Joey? Why do you not just try to steamroll Christy, which is a typical Enneagram 8 thing, which as an eight, fellow eight I can relate to? Yes. I'm a good steam roller.

Joey Speers:

Phenomenal steamroller. She is so great at stopping the steam train. She's probably a lot of what would be able to stop me. I would like to say, "Oh, I'm able to see it in myself and I can pump the breaks." There's just a lot of times where she'll give it to me straight and say, "Hey, you said this. That's not how I know you wanted to say and nor how you think you should say something like that and I need to check you on that." And I go, "Oh, okay. I can take that back." She's a great companion to help me temper the things I need to temper and also cheer on the things that I need to be cheered on for. I think it's a lot of push and play. I've definitely messed that up a ton of times. That's a daily thing for me where I'm going, "Ooh, I could be a little bit softer there," or, "I should have said that softer." It's been so helpful. She's been phenomenally helpful in helping me learn how to not always be right.

Christy Speers:

I love eights because I'm always like, "They're not afraid for confrontation." I don't know what this is, if Enneagram has any info on the six, but I feel like I'm not afraid of confrontation and especially with him. I think I love it because I can come to him and be like, "Hey, we need to work this out." It seems like we just vibe in that. I think that that's been really, really great. I think a lot of it is checking your ego at the door, which is very hard for me, I think. I love validation. So I think when we do have those conflict oriented conversations, when it's something on my end and it's like, "Ah, this didn't come up to par," or whatever it is, I think it's such, and it's still such a learning experience, but I realize a lot of our arguments around work are just surrounded by my ego rather than something that's actually wrong between us working together. If I can check my ego and go, "Okay, best idea wins, not best person wins," then I go, "Okay, we can actually move forward and have a thriving business."

Joey Speers:

Something great about her personality is, I think I'm always right, but I think a lot of things that I think I'm always right on aren't actually right, they're just maybe the quickest thing. I think I'm such a, "Let's just keep going. If I can just keep going and keep the momentum up, we're going to succeed somehow." There's probably a lot of truth to that, but I think where she comes in, she'll go, "Well, why don't we slow it down and let's talk about that." And I go, "Well, no, no, no, you're just wrong." I think her personality going-

Christy Speers:

He says it in a nicer way.

Joey Speers:

... "Why don't we go on a walk for 10 minutes and talk about this?" That's been of our favorite things to do.

When we feel like we're getting into some kind of conflict about work, we'll just go, "Let's just go on a walk." We live in California. It's always beautiful. Let's go on a walk outside. I think her natural inclination to slow things down and slow down conversations, slow down conflict to actually find a great answer rather than just finding the quickest answer, which I think deep down is probably what I do most often. I don't find the right answer all the time, I just find the quickest thing, just so... It's been really helpful and something that I can take and do, I think a lot of areas in my life.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Credit to both of you. You're young and you were both successful in your own so it'd be very easy for either of you to adopt a, "No, I'm right and you're wrong. I know this is my field, don't mess with me." Let's talk about branding, because at Creativ Rise, you do a couple of different things. You do some brand therapy, but you also work with entrepreneurs. I want to start with branding. You helped my company about a year and a half ago through a branding exercise that was incredibly clarifying because this was a hobby 10 years ago that turned into a thing, that turned into what I do all the time.

It's really confusing because I wish I could say that there was a grand plan and oh yeah, one day we're going to, there's... None of that. It just kind of happened and then here you are in the midst of it. What am I actually doing. On the macro level, what are some principles of branding that if you get these things right in today's environment, things tend to go well? And then we'll talk about the mistakes that you keep seeing people make again and again.

Joey Speers:

That's a great question. I think there's so many things that we always look over when it comes to branding because branding is, as we've defined and we've told you, we walk through this with your team and the exercise, it's just how you're experienced. It's everything. It's not just your logo, it's not just your color, it's not just your font, it's everything. It's how someone feels when they interact with a piece of text, the podcast, meeting you in person. It's everything. I think some fundamental stuff that you do really well and other brands that do well do is it's not about you. The Carey Nieuwhof Company, the Art of Leadership Academy, whatever it is, it's not about Carey, it's about the people you guys serve. I think-

Carey Nieuwhof:

It is.

Joey Speers:

It is, and I think that's where a lot of people go wrong is they think, "Well the brands got to be about me. I've got to somehow make it about myself." Personal brands specifically, they really struggle with this. I think if you can get really clear on... I always start with problems because the only reason why you exist as a company is to solve a problem of some sort. I think a brand, if you can center your brand around a common evil, if you can really associate yourself with an evil, something you're up against in the world, that's what we talked about in brand therapy when we did it with you guys is a lot of entrepreneurs go, "I want to push away from problems because we just have solutions and we're good and everything we do works. We don't want to talk about all the problems in the world." But I go, "No, you've got to really, really get close. Draw near to the problems that you see in the world."

If your company was a person and walking down the street, what things would it look at and go, "Ah, doesn't have to be that way and how can we do something about it?" I think if you can shape a brand around that, start with a problem and then go, "okay, now what's our methodology? How do we design a methodology for people to interact with and experience in order to help them take them from A to B?" Then I think the last part of any good brand is just the result. How do we reverse engineer? How do we make sure we get the outcomes we want for the people and how is that a very clear pillar of our brand? Not only do we get people there, but we also talk about it. I think that's one of the things we talked about with you.

I was like, "Carey, you should really talk more about the people that are having success through the leadership academy, pre-leadership academy, through the podcast. Talk more about the results people

are getting." I think those three things make up a brand story. What's the problem, what's the methodology that your brand is going to be built around in order to... The vehicle that's going to take them to the solution? And then what is the solution? What happens to their lives? What do they experience? How does life change once they've interacted with that brand in some capacity? I think those three things are really fundamental and those are the foundations of any really, really great brand. If you can get really clear on that, I think, the rest is puzzle pieces that just seem to be easy to find on the table.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Christy, what are some of the branding mistakes you see companies make over and over again?

Christy Speers:

I think the main one and Joey touched on it, is having it be all about yourself, and I think that manifests in a lot of different ways. A lot of people will just talk about their founder, a lot of people talk about, "Oh here's why we started our thing," and it's not others focused. I think that can also come in ways of just talking about your services and this is a huge problem in marketing. It's people just talking about what they do. Even if they're talking about the solution, they're talking about it in a way, a service oriented way rather than an others focused transformation way. I think as soon as you can go... and I think when we're saying it's about others, it doesn't disclude you.

When we did brand therapy with you Carey, one of my favorite parts of the entire brand therapy was when you actually started tearing up because you were talking about why you started it in the very first place and you're talking about your heart for young leaders and you're talking about your experience of somebody else I think scholarshiping you and your wife into going to a conference, being able to actually learn and move forward. You were choking up and I was like, "This is the coolest thing to see, the heart of why someone starts something." I would say your brand needs to also connect with the heart of the why, and the why being so important and so crucial to everything that you do.

When you get the why right and you get the pieces of the methodology down and you can then align your whole team, I think that's when branding and marketing and all that stuff becomes fluid rather than disjointed because I think a lot of teams feel very disjointed. They feel like, "Okay, the social team is talking about this because it's a trend." Then we've got the people that are actually doing the products in this side or we have the pastors on stage talking about this. Everyone's disjointed, everyone has all their different opinions and nothing is moving forward in alignment. I think great branding and great action on branding is when everything's actually aligned, which is why we do what we do.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's so mission-driven, which should resonate with most of the leaders who listen to this podcast. It's so funny, I hadn't thought about it from branding perspective, the reason I started this podcast was a very similar vibe to why I'm doing what I'm doing now. I was starting to go onto the speaking circuit, you'd be in a green room, you know how it goes.

Christy Speers:

Yeah. Of course.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You have these amazing conversations with people and I would always leave going, "Oh, I wish my staff could have heard that. I wish the elders could have heard that." Sometimes, "I wish my wife, I wish everybody could have heard that." I'd been a podcast listener for years and I thought, "Well I'm just going to try to bring those conversations to the world." That's part of what makes this tick. You and I, we have spent a lot of time together off-mic in California, here in Canada, on the road et cetera, and I'm like, "I want to bring this conversation to the world." And that's fun. But that's a problem to solve, right?

Joey Speers:

Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

If you don't have a problem to solve, do you ever have that where you're dealing with a leader and they don't even know what problem they're solving?

Christy Speers:

All the time I'd say.

Joey Speers:

It's quite popular. Or, I think even worse, this is probably one of the main things I see leaders dealing with is they know what problem to solve, but they have no idea how to actually communicate that to the rest of the team. I think that's where so many organizations get stunted is they go the leaders, "Oh I know what we're doing and I know what problem we're solving, if everyone else could just get it." It's like, well you have no framework for how you actually talk about how you guys solve that problem. No wonder they don't get it right.

I think that's what's so fun about our job is we get to step into organizations and go, "Okay, you might get it but nobody else does. How do we make sure every single person here gets it and not only gets it but feels empowered by it to the point where they know how they're a part of it and they know they can push it forward?" I think both of those things. Sometimes leaders don't quite know and sometimes when they do know, they very, very often don't know how to communicate it in a proper way to rally everybody around it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

When you think about, because we have a lot of church leaders and a lot of the business leaders who listen to this are involved at their local church, so we'll just pick on the church for a minute, if the church had a marketing or a branding problem, and I know those are separate things, how would you define it? It would be like, "Oh, if I could just stroke of the pen, change this," in most churches I'm seeing, what would that stroke of the pen involve? What do you wish churches would just get and change?

Joey Speers:

There's probably quite a few of them. You might have a different answer than I do. My answer would probably be similar to what Christy was just talking about, but they all just look like commodities, a church is a commodity. Where we're from in the States, there's one every couple hundred feet, it seems like on some streets. I think a lot of churches struggle with going, they're so commoditized, they're like... They get into this routine of getting so focused on metrics, so focused on tactical stuff that I think it pulls a lot away from some of the more emotional and spiritual stuff that they're really there to do. I think it

all stems from the issue of looking the same as everybody else because they don't know how to communicate maybe why they're different. The way you communicate why you're different is communicating well why you exist.

I think a lot of churches don't know how to talk about why they exist, they just talk about what they do. I'll ask a pastor, I'll say, "Why do you guys do what you do?" And they say, "Well to build disciples." I'm like, "Well, that's not why you do what you do, that's what you do." And they go, "Oh yeah." And they go, "Well, is that a problem?" I say, "Yeah, you've got to have something a little bit more, a little bit deeper maybe that's more inviting for somebody." A great example of that would be you get up on stage and in the morning and you're preaching and you say, "Hey, welcome to church." Or let's say you're a greeter and you're getting up on stage or whatever you call that person that gets up and welcomes people and they go, "Hey welcome to," I'll use a random church name that I actually used when we did this teaching for the Art Leadership Academy.

This is not a real church or it's probably a real church but not one that I'm referring to. "Hey, welcome to Gateway Church. We're so glad you're here. At Gateway Church we have multiple services. We build disciples and we've got a good kids program. We're so glad you're here. Enjoy the service." Versus somebody getting up on stage and saying, "Hey, welcome to Gateway Church. We totally exist. Everything you're going to see in the next hour and 15 minutes is because we fundamentally believe that relationship with Jesus changes your life, can change the foundation of your family, it can create a brighter future. We just want to invite you into that. If you're new to that, welcome. If you're old to that, you've been doing that for a long time, welcome. We're so glad you're here." Those are drastically different communication styles, talking about why they're there that morning.

I think people in the congregation are going to have radically different responses to that. That's an example of somebody talking from the stage but I think when you actually break that down on a micro level across social platforms, across events. Anything that a church does, it creates a lot of confusion when you don't know how to talk about why you exist. That's probably the number one... It's a little bit of a long answer to get there. That's probably the number one thing that I see churches doing wrong and that bleeds, if I can go a little bit deeper, that bleeds not only that it doesn't... A lot of churches might have that figured out on the top level, but they don't know how to actually communicate that to everybody in the organization to a point where they can then communicate that externally.

The biggest thing about a brand is a brand... The best brands in the world are so clear internally, all the way down to the guy who sweeps the floors that externally it just comes off so, so full and you can experience it in the full. I think that's where a lot of churches have problems. The pastor knows what's going on and he knows why they exist but if you work your way down the chain, call it, people don't know how to communicate that. I think that's where the experience for people across the board gets broken.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, and you end up with churches talking about themselves a lot.

Christy Speers:

Yes.

Joey Speers:

Well, when you don't know how to talk about why you do what you do, because why you do what you do shouldn't actually be about you, it should always be about the other person.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Absolutely.

Joey Speers:

When you don't know how to talk about why you do what you do, you talk about what you do and that's not great.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Christy, what would you say to churches? How would you wave the magic wand and change marketing?

Christy Speers:

Joe and I actually talking about this a little bit earlier, but I have this, I don't know if it's a bone to pick or something, but there's a trend where people follow trends to a tee. They go, "Okay, we need a new marketing strategy so we're just going to follow whatever the next big church is doing or we're just going to follow what Elevations is doing." Or Hillsong, or whatever it is. It's this almost replacing... using Tylenol on something that needs surgery. You can't just slap a great filter or that's a good ad copy that you basically copy and pasted from somebody else or a sermon series title, whatever it is. It needs to be coming from why you do what you do and why you're there. I think the Tylenol aid of, well if we can just get enough attention with something that looks cool. The problem is that might bring people in the door but it's not going to keep them. You'll have critics rather than a real congregation, I think.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Trends seem to have really accelerated on social media lately. Everything from... I don't even know what to call it because I don't do it, I just see it on my feet all the time, but where you're using some movie soundtrack or whatever and you're just voicing over top of that or and it changes every few months.

Christy Speers:

Oh, absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Comments on that. What are the strengths and what are the weaknesses of trend jacking?

Christy Speers:

Trend jacking is interesting. It can get you a lot of views, which some people would say, "Hey, there's no bad press, getting enough attention is great." However, I would say look at your metrics. If you're just getting views, great, but if it's not actually turning into, if you're a business clients or if you're a church continued attendance or whatever your metrics-

Joey Speers:

Baptisms, yeah.

Christy Speers:

Baptisms, whatever it is, small groups, et cetera, then it's fluff, views are fluff. You want it to be something that your inherent brand and everything is so aligned that if you get a lot of views, but it's not

the right thing you're talking about. We talk about this sometimes with people who've blown up on TikTok recently and he says, "Well this one girl posted this crazy video where she was swimming with this whale. It was almost like National Geographic. She got 20 million views but the rest of her account was about something else so she didn't get any followers." You can get views, but if you don't get true followers of your brand, of your company, whatever it is, then it's fluff in my opinion.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a really good point because the videos show up on my feed all the time and you're... I know this one guy who did a drum solo and got six million views or whatever, but his life didn't change at all. So you had six million views, nobody knows who you are. I'm not a DIY guy, I always have a guy who does stuff, but when I do DIY and I'm on YouTube and I'm like, you know how to change a furnace filter or whatever it happens to be, I'm on some guy who shows me how to change a furnace filter, but I don't subscribe.

Joey Speers:

No, exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm not his best friend. I don't buy his product. You help me and nine million other guys who don't know how to do anything, thank you.

Joey Speers:

It's a one way relationship.

Carey Nieuwhof:

One way relationship and I think we forget that.

Joey Speers:

I think that's the key right there. I think when churches really try and buy into the trends, and I'll even just pull back for a second, if you do not have a really clear, we call it a brand identity so internal characteristics of your brand that you can live externally, if you don't have any of that and you're aiming to hit trends, then as Christy said, it feels a little bit hollow. It can feel like a shell of something. My opinion on the trends, Christy was like, "Oh I'm not a huge fan of them." I think trends can be great, but it's a secondary thing because if you don't have all the other stuff, the brand identity solid in a consistent message going out, the second you start to try trends, like you said, it just turns into a one way relationship because there's no other intrinsic value or something to chew on for people.

In the long run I think that can really hurt. That can really hurt, and it's a huge waste of time. It's a huge waste of a church budget to put somebody on, "Hey, go find trends for six hours a day," and it never does anything for you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, wow. That's really good and that kind of morphs nicely into the other thing I wanted to talk to you guys about, which is really, you coach a lot of young entrepreneurs in the digital space, whether that's photography, but people are trying to make a living online, we've got a lot of those people listening right now, and they tend to be under 30 or definitely under 40. They tend to have some kind of traction, but

they're trying to build traction and that's another recurring theme on this podcast that I love coming back to. A lot of people want to be known online but they don't have anything to be known for. In other words, I don't actually know what I'm doing. Talk about the work that you do with young entrepreneurs and the masterminds that you run. What are some keys to actually developing something meaningful and successful online?

Joey Speers:

Great question. So a lot of the people that we work with are very left-brained, very creative. What we do is we just try and help them engage the part of the right brain that they don't engage often, some of the tactical stuff and I think it comes down to that. One of the biggest things that I think when we see people really take off and do well, whether it's people we're watching from afar or the tons of people that we get to actually guide, the people who do well are people that really, really fundamentally finally understand how to be a problem solver. We've talked about this a ton of the podcast, I've used that word a ton, but I feel like I've got a book in me somewhere down in my future about that. I think it's when people go, "Okay, I'm trying to make it."

And yes, if you're going to be known for something, you want to be known for being against something. I'm against this problem. Carey, you're against leaders being underdeveloped and burning up, burned out. You're against leaders starving organizations or because they're underdeveloped and they're undersupported, all of that stuff. That's what you're against. I think when we see people, whether they're photographers, social media strategists, social media managers, filmmakers, graphic designers, all the people that we help across the board underneath that creative one label that we throw on it, I think the big thing that gives people momentum is they finally go, "Okay, I'm not a creative, I'm a problem solver, I'm not a photographer, I'm someone who shows up on your wedding and captures the best day of your life in the way you want it to be captured so you can relive it every day of your life when you look at those photos."

Carey Nieuwhof:

What's the problem for a wedding photographer? That's a great example. Bad capture?

Joey Speers:

There's a lot. There's different types of problems, there's external problems, there's internal problems, there's philosophical problems. The external problem for a wedding photographer would be, well they don't have wedding photos, so you got to hire someone to come, gives you your wedding photos. The internal problem might be, I'm actually worried that I'm not going to be able to connect with my photographer on the day, therefore I'm going to feel uncomfortable in front of the camera and therefore my wedding photos aren't going to be something I look back on and go, "I look really uncomfortable. I don't enjoy these photos." That might be the internal problem.

Then the philosophical problem could be something that's a lot deeper than that. I think when you start teaching these very, again left brain people, some of these more tactical approaches to things like that, it can get really cool and they get really excited because they go, "Whoa, I'm not just showing up and clicking a camera. I'm actually completely revolutionizing how this bride is going to feel in the moment of all these photos and if I can make that bride feel so cared for and no matter what the photos actually look like, she's going to love the photos for the rest of her life." Because she just sees the moment when she looks at them.

Christy Speers:

And that's why you're able to charge a premium is because you've then connected with the heart rather than just being a commodity by offering the same service as everybody else.

Joey Speers:

That's where you can scale things,

Carey Nieuwhof:

You avoid the race to the bottom, again, quoting Seth Godin, because you can always find somebody cheaper to shoot your wedding.

Christy Speers:

Absolutely.

Joey Speers:

Always.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Let's talk about that as a model. I think we had Jasmine star on here and she talked about that as well because she started as a photographer, but there is a race to the bottom and that's true with all services. "I'll do your wedding for less." "Great." "Well, I've got an uncle who has a nice DSLR and he'll shoot the wedding for free."

Joey Speers:

Classic, classic stuff.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I don't even know what it costs to shoot a wedding these days. What's a high end number to shoot a wedding these days?

Christy Speers:

Oh, gosh. Well it can go astronomical, but I would say in California, maybe like \$5,000 would be like you have a nice wedding photographer. Definitely not the top-top. Top Would be more like eight, nine.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Let's say it's eight or \$9,000 to shoot your wedding and I'm like, "I know somebody who can do it for four." What do you say?

Christy Speers:

If I was the eight or nine?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Eight or nine.

Christy Speers:

I would say, "Absolutely there are people that will shoot your wedding for free and that's great and if that's what you want to do, that's awesome." I would say that my approach is for people who are looking for, let's say if we're in the eight or nine, we're talking about more celebrity clients or influencer people that are worried about maybe privacy, things like that or wanting that quick turnaround for a magazine, whatever it is.

I would say, "I know that your wedding is something that should be absolutely so personal and it's something that you deserve to be the first one to see those images, be the first one that's going to be having access over what they are and what you can control in that scenario and how much you want to remember that day for what it really is. I'm going to be there to not only be the day of person, but I'm going to work with you for two months before and we're going to develop an inspiration board. We're going to come up with ideas for your wedding so that you can have not only the best day of your life, but also photos that are going to be exactly how you wanted to be captured."

Carey Nieuwhof:

I put you on the spot 100%. I just want everybody to rewind and listen to what happened. You know what you didn't do? You didn't talk about yourself, you didn't get defensive, you didn't try to justify-

Joey Speers:

She didn't say, "Oh, my camera is this-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Let's talk about that-

Joey Speers:

I've been editing for eight years.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I've been editing for eight years.

Christy Speers:

I've won these many awards.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, exactly. "Do you know who I am?" You didn't play that card. It was like, well what you want is... I think that is so rare in marketing. It's like my pet peeve when I teach, I do The Art of Online Influence course and one of the sessions is on, do not use the word we, do not use the word I, use the word you. Talk about your clients, talk about the person you're trying to help. You need, you are frustrated, you are stuck, you had a vacation, you came back more tired than when you left. What do you do with that? If I'm like, I had a vacation and I came back more tired than... Nobody cares about me.

I say that to my staff all the time. Sometimes when I'm reviewing copy, I'm like, "Nobody cares about us. We have to remember that. We're here to serve the person." Underscore, underscore, underscore. Getting noticed, other tips for getting noticed online. We talked about monetization a little bit, but just for the person who's like, "I'm still waiting for my breakthrough." I think if you staple this together, if you start to weave it together, better analogy, you've got cold calling, you've got tagging, you've got

patience, you've got setting yourself apart, focus on the client knowing the problem you're going to solve. What else for people who want to get noticed?

Christy Speers:

I would say one of the main things, and maybe this is just simple, but it's kind of like nicheing down to your content. It's not talking about everything because you talk about everything, no one's going to listen because it's not directed at somebody thinking, get crystal clear about who you're talking to and what they want to see and just repeat, rinse and repeat every single time. You probably only need... Let's say if you're a social media manager, if that's your business, you're trying to get companies to give you their socials to run, you talk about five things over and over again and those five things only.

Joey Speers:

That's all you need.

Christy Speers:

All you need is to repurpose content that's going to focus on the stress of having to run your own Instagram all the time and how it's so awful and talk about that problem, or talk about growth metrics and what you guys do in teaming together with your clients, gives great results. Talk about that. Talk about three other things and that's all you need to talk about. Just give those five things and just rinse and repeat and you'll gain traction.

Joey Speers:

People always talk about nicheing down, it's like, "Well, I'm going to niche down into this area of fitness or this area of ministry." We always encourage people, you don't have to necessarily think about nicheing down in that way, but just niche to a problem, niche to a specific problem. I think once you have that, that's a very... Christy was talking about content and posting things like that, I think that's great. I think you could go a step further and talk about what that content does. If you want to get traction online, I think you just have to go, "How do I be an authority and be the person who owns the distribution of educating people in this space?" I think that's something you do phenomenally, your podcast is huge. How many episodes have you done where it's just you?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh yeah, 5, 10.

Joey Speers:

It's because you own the distribution of knowledge in this space. I think if someone's... Let's say they're in ministry and they're wanting to build their own online ministry, they're feeling like, "Hey, I want to build a social channel that's going to reach youth the ages of 13 to 17, and I'm just going to start one." You've got to somehow be consistent enough and in enough pockets of, not pockets as in getting money, but you got to be in enough areas where people are going, "Oh, this person is an authority in this space." I think the second you become known for giving more than you take and you become known for, "Well he's the person that educates me on this." I think also, we were talking about this earlier today too, Alex Shimizu, I don't know if you know who he is.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, yeah, yeah. I've been following him recently. Thank you Jon Acuff for the match.

Joey Speers:

He's so smart. He always says, "You'll always do well if you can do a couple things that surround your offer." One of them that he talks about that I love is cutting the time delay. You want to blow up on something. How do you cut the time delay between the problem and the solution that people would ever consider listening to you or watching you or liking something that you've posted for. Let's go back to that example, you're going to start an online ministry that reaches people 13 to 17, well, what are their problems and what are the solutions that you have as someone who wants to minister to them? Then how do you create an environment that's going to cut the time delay and make that consumption quicker and make that problem disappear faster? It's like how do you just develop a brand and then develop systems and, as we were talking about earlier, what's the methodology to what you do? How can you increase the amount of output I guess your methodology can have? There's so many different ways we could talk about that.

Christy Speers:

A little encouragement. If someone feels like, "Oh shoot, I feel so overwhelmed. How am I going to be an authority?" It's really not hard to become an authority online. You just got to be consistent for about a month or two and people will start thinking you about being that person. I'm sure, Carey, people are like, "You're the Green Egg guy. You're the expert on lawns, You're the lawn line guy."

Joey Speers:

You're not even trying because I'd be the expert on online-

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's funny when you land and it's like, oh... because my life is very uncreative. It's like, "Yeah, I'm usually at the Big Green Egg or mowing my lawn when I'm home." I love talking to Dave Ramsey about it. One of the questions I was so excited, I thought about this question for years is, "You've talked about the same thing for three decades. How do you not get tired of it?" You look at his post Seven Baby steps comes up all the time. Those baby steps haven't changed in 25 years. He just talks. You know what he said? "Every day somebody wakes up broke and I get to show them for the first time." First time I asked Gary Chapman about this, we spoke at a conference in Edmonton and he's there and it's like -30 Celsius, which is the same as -30 Fahrenheit. It's ridiculous, you're dead.

I'm like, "What is he doing here?" The Five Love Languages I think it sold over 25 million copies. I'm like, "If I'm Gary's age," and he was well into his 70s, "What am I doing in Edmonton in January?" He's not even keynoting. And he goes, "Oh, there are people who haven't heard." And that's true. There's somebody who bought The Five Love Languages today and he's still talking about it 30 years after he first wrote it. I think this is really good. Guys, I feel like we could talk for days because we do talk for days sometimes but we've got to go to dinner. Next time Big Green Egg, or the boat or all of the above.

Joey Speers:

All the above.

Carey Nieuwhof:

This transcript was exported on Sep 29, 2022 - view latest version [here](#).

We got rained out on the boat, so hence a podcast episode. Anyway, people are going to follow you. Tell us about where you are in social these days and also Creativ Rise, where they can find that.

Joey Speers:

Yeah, so @joeyspeers, any social platform. We're mainly on Instagram and TikTok these days. You are-

Christy Speers:

@christyjspeers on Instagram and christyspeers on TikTok and then @creativrise. But there's no E on Creative because of a domain battle.

Joey Speers:

It's a story for another day. It was a domain battle I had for a while.

Christy Speers:

@creativrise. Yeah, if you-

Joey Speers:

All social platforms.

Christy Speers:

Yeah, all social platforms.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Awesome. Guys, thank you so, so much.

Joey Speers:

Thank you. Great convo.

Christy Speers:

Thanks for having us.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I know a lot of you are young leaders and so I want to keep bringing you young leaders on the podcast. Every time I ask Joey how old he is, I'm like a year or two ahead and that's so great, man. I love people who accomplish a lot early on in life. If you want more, we got show notes for you, including transcripts and all the links mentioned in the episode. You can go to careynieuwhof.com/episode524. Thanks to our partners. Pro MediaFire wants to help you get recession proof. Join them for the recession proof growth strategy webinar. Simply go to promediafire.com/recessionproof and you and your church can help provide relief supplies to victims of natural disasters and other global events all over the world. Go to convoyofhope.org/donate and they want to make you the hero as the local church leader and obviously help people in need. Next episode, we've got Chad Veach. He is Zoe Church lead pastor and bestselling author, and we even talk preachers and sneakers. Here's an excerpt.

Chad Veach:

Hey listen, my biggest beef with this is just please don't ever try and be a celebrity pastor. If you're going for that, if you're going for celebrity, something is clinically wrong with you. I'm okay if it just lands in your lap and it's... I was a youth pastor for 15 years and 10 of it was in Seattle and I loved to pastor high school students. I'll never forget going to cafeterias and somehow you're drawn to the ASB president, or the captain of the football team, or the basketball guy.

I'm okay with you reaching influential people, I think everybody does. To me, it's such a God given grace. Think about Paul. Paul says, "I can't boast about the measure outside of the sphere God's given me, but what God's given is supernatural." I didn't earn it. I didn't deserve it. God's given me a grace. He's given me an influence. This is my sphere and it's so sovereign and I think that I'm okay with that. I'm not okay if you going, "I want to be close to celebrities. I want to be famous." Pastor and famous don't go to... It's not our aim.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's a really good episode. Also coming up we got Brian Copperman, and John and McRae Acuff, Chris Anderson from Ted Talks. Who else have we got? Annie F. Downs coming back, Patrick Lencioni, and a whole lot more. Thank you so much for listening and if you love this episode, please leave us a rating and review. We read them all the time. And because you're the kind of awesome human that listens to the end of podcasts, I got a free gift for you. Maybe you're a blogger, a podcaster or an author or a communicator, and you're wondering, "How do I get to my dream audience? How do I get them to notice my message?"

And then once they notice your message, how do you get them to take action? Well, I share all of my secrets on how to build an influential online presence in a free mastermind that will show you exactly that. What you need to do, what you can do is check it out at influencekickstarter.com. To register for free, simply go to influencekickstarter.com. You can register for free and I hope it really helps. I so appreciate you. Thank you so much for listening, and I hope our time together today has helped you thrive in life and leadership.